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SUNDAY AFTERNOON ADDRESSES

IN CONVOCATION HALL, IN 1891.

PUBLISHED BY THE STUDENTS.



PREFATORY NOTE.

The students of Queen's University who undertook the publication of the present pamphlet did so out of a desire to have the addresses which it contains in a permanent form, for their own future reference, and to extend to the public outside of University circles, some of the benefits in suggestion and inspiration which were received in listening to them. While the printed page cannot convey the full life and momentum of oral delivery, yet it gives the advantage of that repeated perusal which is necessary to grasp the full significance of the addresses.

With the patronage of the thinking public, and the co-operation of the Professors, the students would like to make such a pamphlet as this an annual publication. The delivery and publishing of a series of such addresses on vital religious questions would not only be of great benefit to students, but would also be an important step in line with University Extension Work.

THE PUBLISHING COMMITTEE.

How to Read the Bible.

No. 1.

The Bible is not read in our day as it was in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Then, in consequence of the invention of the art of printing, it first became possible to multiply copies with ease, while a mighty popular and religious movement made it the peoples' book in Germany and Britain. Men were charmed to find that they could not only understand its stories, but that it was far more interesting than the discourses which they had been accustomed to hear from Monks or even Bishops. It had, also, the great charm of novelty. In the parish church, to the book-board of which a copy was chained, crowds gathered every day of the week and listened for hours, when they were fortunate enough to secure a reader. That popular eagerness lasted for a century or two. The Scottish covenant was signed by peers and peasants, sometimes with blood instead of ink. The English Squire of the same date, Carlyle says, "wore his Bible-doctrine round him as our Squire wears his shot-belt; went abroad with it nothing doubting." The language of the day was Biblical and it came from the heart. The sermons of the Puritan Divines were filled with quotations from Scripture, and the hearers liked those parts the best, and when the hour-glass had run out, they rejoiced to see the preacher turn it up again.

It is not so now, either in home, or church, or any where else. The eagerness now is to read the daily and weekly newspaper, the last periodical, or the new book that a popular novelist, poet, historian or man of science gives to the world. If you wish to see a crowd of men eagerly reading, you need not look for it in a church. You must go to the reading-room of a public library, a Mechanics' Institute, or a Young Men's Christian Association, and there—in all alike—you find men, young and old, at any hour in the day, poring over—not the Bible—but the daily newspaper or other scrappy literature. If you wish to see a crowd eagerly listening, you must go to an election meeting in city, village or country, where not very eloquent speakers discuss the tariff to multitudes, who are willing to stand in crowded passages or round the doors till midnight, without showing the least sign of weariness.

The changed condition of things is undeniable. And, whenever there is an effect, depend upon it there is a cause adequate to produce the effect. If the Bible is not read as eagerly and generally as it was three hundred years ago, the reason is not that people are less

intelligent, less anxious for guidance, or less christian than they were then. Quite the contrary. The nineteenth century is far more truly christian in spirit than the sixteenth or seventeenth. The language of the Bible does not enter into our sermons or daily speech as it did in the days of the Puritans and Covenanters, but the ordinary Canadian clergyman is surely as good a christian as Pound-text, Kettle-drummle or MacBriar, and the christian layman of to-day is quite up to the average Cavalier or Roundhead of the Cromwellian epoch. The reason of the change must be, either that the people get from other sources what they then got from the Bible, or that the Bible is not felt by them to be as truly related to their every day life as it was by the men who signed the Solemn League and Covenant. I believe that we must seek for the reason along both of these lines. You ask, is the Bible then not to have its old place as the great factor in popular education and life? I believe that it will never stand comparatively alone as it did three centuries ago. But, if its ideas mould character more thoroughly and extensively, its supremacy is the more complete. That this may be the case, and that the Bible may be read universally with interest and profit, men must feel that it bears upon their individual and national concerns as truly as it was believed to do in the days of the Reformers. I believe that another day of power for the Bible is dawning, and that it will be again read and studied, not as a religious duty merely, but with eager interest, as the great guide of life, by intelligent people and by seekers after God in all lands. I shall try to answer the question, how is this to be accomplished, or what is to be done that we may read the Bible with most profit? This afternoon I shall point out what we must not do.

We must not—on pretence of honouring God's word—place it out of relation to reason. The Bible is not a mystery, but a revelation. Depend upon it, when you tell men that a book is mysterious and that their reason is quite inadequate to its consideration, they will very soon put it on the shelf and allow the dust to accumulate on its venerable binding. When we study the Word of God, reason should be at its best and conscience most tender. When we refuse to investigate fearlessly, when we muffle or muzzle our intellect, we dishonour that in us which is highest and holiest, that which links us to God and is intended to raise us to Him.

Again, we must not put the Bible in a position that it does not arrogate to itself. It does not profess to be the end, but simply a means. It takes a subordinate, not the supreme, place. If we put it first instead of second, we are guilty of the sin of Bibliolatry. By this I mean that to many people the Bible is valuable because it is a book. Now, that is what makes the Koran so valuable to the Mahometan. He believes that the Koran is word for word what God dictated verbally to Mahomet, what Mahomet wrote down in Arabic,

what believers still have in the Arabic that Mahomet wrote, and what therefore ought not to be translated into any other language. This is the conception that some christians have of Biblical inspiration. They believe that the Hebrew consonants were dictated to the first writers of the Old Testament, and that the Hebrew vowels, added by unbelieving Scribes centuries after Christ, were also inspired. This, they call a high view of inspiration. It is not only a low view, it is simply destructive of inspiration. The Bible is most valuable, because, unlike the Koran, it is more than a book. As a book it has human elements as well as the Divine element, and—so far as it is human—there must be limitation, imperfection, localism, growth, and the possibility of error. The Bible is a record of the revelations of Himself that God made to many men in widely different times and circumstances. This record is a glass through which we are to see how the living God guided men of like passions with ourselves, and guided a very imperfect community in former days. It is thus a signpost, pointing not to itself, but to Him who is as ready to reveal Himself unto men now as He was forty, thirty or twenty centuries ago, and who not only revealed Himself fully in His Son, but gave us the spirit of His Son to dwell with us forever.

“ Mahomet's truth lay in a Holy Book,
Christ's in a sacred life.

So while the world rolls on from change to change,
And realms of thought expand,
The letter stands without expanse or range,
Stiff as a dead man's hand.

While as the life-blood fills the growing form,
The Spirit Christ has shed
Flows through the ripening ages fresh and warm,
More felt than heard or read.”

A man is a Bibliolater who confines his view to the Book. When he does so, the Bible is just as effectual to intercept God and keep Him out of the soul as any other sacred idol. I wish to give very emphatic warning on this point, because men are born idolaters. Take one idol away from them and they soon substitute another, more subtle it may be, but all the more dangerous on that account. Even doctrine which men specially call “the Gospel” has been used as a club to strike down others and a screen to hide God from the soul.

Perhaps the best way in which to deliver ourselves from Bibliolatry is to reflect for how short a time in the history of the world or even of the Church, the Bible has been accessible to the people. We sometimes speak as if it were indispensable to the existence of religion

and the study of it essential to anyone being a christian. Evidently, God did not think so. Where was the Bible during the milleniums before Abraham, and the centuries between Abraham and Moses? The Father of the faithful had three hundred and eighteen trained men of war, born in his house. That great household or tribe had not the Bible, but it had God. During the thousand years between Moses and Ezra, with how much of the Bible in its present shape was the Church blessed? In the next five hundred years, the three divisions of the Old Testament were codified, transcribed over and over again and lovingly studied, but notwithstanding, that was the least original and the most poverty-stricken time in the history of Israel. The most important New Testament period includes the ministry of Jesus, the Pentecostal days of the Jerusalem Church, and the extension of Christianity to the great centres of civilization. How much of the New Testament was written in those wonderful fifty years? None of it. During the fourteen centuries after the first century, the Gospel gained its two great triumphs,—the conversion of the Roman Empire and the conversion of the nations that constitute Modern Christendom. Through all that long history the Bible was in existence, but was not generally accessible. Since the Reformation it has been in the hands of the people, but what great work has Protestantism as yet done? Not a single nation has been won for Christ. America, is, of course, only the overspill of Europe. But the Asiatic civilizations with their teeming millions, and the continent of Africa remain, religiously, pretty much as they were in the sixteenth century. I do not depreciate what has been done in the last three or four hundred years, but I point to an outstanding startling fact in order that we may not be unduly puffed up. Christendom is preparing, I believe, for a great advance all along the line, but for that, something more is needed than simply the possession of the Bible or the use of traditional watchwords.

Why have I given this brief historical sketch? To impress upon you that we must use the Bible aright and that in order to do so we must not put it in a place in which God has not put it, but must allow it to do freely the work that He has intended it should do for our souls. The Bible does not profess to be indispensable. It does not arrogate to itself the first position. The God of grace, the God of redeeming love, is alone indispensable. He alone must have the first place. On Him the soul lives and without Him it does not live. The supreme fact of religion is that the spirit of God can touch the spirit of man. The Bible reveals Him as doing so in past ages, and He is the Eternal, living and dealing with the world of men and things as truly now as then. It reveals Him as inflexible righteousness in the Old and exhaustless love in the New Testament, as Jehovah in the Old and Jesus in the New. Hence its value, its altogether unique and extraordinary value. Hence too the fact that it ceases to be valuable when it is used

otherwise than as a glass through which to see the ever-living God. On pretence of honouring, men sometimes degrade it; and we who are living in the dispensation of the Spirit, with all the immense advantages that accrue to us from the gains and experiences of previous generations, may thereby make ourselves poorer than the people who lived with Abraham, Moses or Ezra in the dim twilight of revelation. Whenever we exalt the letter at the expense of the spirit, whenever we attach more importance to the Bible than to the great ideas it transmits, we dishonour it and put ourselves at a disadvantage with those who had it not, but who had a glimpse of God. The Book as the joint product of paper, ink and leather makers, of printers, binders and publishers, is nothing more than a piece of handiwork. The spiritual truth it contains is what makes it precious, and that is precious only as it is received into the soil of honest hearts and so becomes to them living truth. Let me quote to you from one of the letters of Fletcher of Madeley, a passage very remarkable, when we consider the theological surroundings of that saintly controversialist, as showing how spiritually minded men protest against the tendency of the unspiritual to exalt the dead letter. "If," he writes, "because we have the letter of Scripture, we must be deprived of all immediate manifestations of Christ and His Spirit, we are great losers by that blessed book, and we might reasonably say, 'Lord, bring us back to the dispensation of Moses! Thy Jewish servants could formerly converse with Thee face to face, but now we can know nothing of Thee but by their writings. They viewed thy glory in various wonderful appearances, but we are indulged only with black lines telling us of thy glory. They had their bright Shekinah, and we have only obscure descriptions of it. They conversed familiarly with Moses their Mediator, with Aaron their high priest and with Samuel their prophet; these holy men gave them unerring direction in doubtful cases; but, alas! the apostles and inspired men are all dead; and thou, Jesus our Mediator, Priest and Prophet, canst not be consulted to any purpose, for thou manifestest thyself no more. As for thy sacred book, thou knowest that sometimes the want of money to purchase it, the want of learning to consult the original, the want of wisdom to understand the translation, the want of skill or sight to read it, prevent our improving it to the best advantage and keep some from reaping any benefit from it at all. O Lord! if because we have this blessed picture of Thee, we must have no discovery of the glorious original, have compassion on us, take back thy precious book and impart thy more precious self to us, as thou didst to thine ancient people.'"

The sacred history lets us see, again and again, that it is God's way to take from us even the things that He has given to testify of Him when we put them in the place of Himself. Precious to the Church in young Samuel's day must have been the Ark, with Aaron's

rod and the pot of manna, memorials of its marvellous wilderness life ; but when it trusted to them, what happened ? The Ark was captured and the budded rod and golden pot disappeared for ever. Dear to many generations must have been that brazen serpent that Moses had made by God's order, and to which their dying forefathers had looked in faith and lived ; but when the children of Israel burned incense to it, Hezekiah, no doubt under the teaching of Isaiah, said, " it is only a piece of brass," and he brake it in pieces. Most precious to the Jews were the Courts of God's House, and above all the Holy of Holies with the recovered Ark and the two slabs of red granite engraven by the finger of God, and the Shekinah, visible symbol of His presence, shining down on the mercy seat. It seemed blasphemy when Jeremiah declared that they were trusting in lying words, when they trusted in these. But, as He had done to His place in Shiloh where He set His name at the first, so did He, not many years after His word had come to Jeremiah, to His place on Mount Zion. The holy and beautiful House was burned up with fire by the Chaldeans. The Shekinah disappeared forever, and what became of the Ark and the Cherubim and the tables of stone, no man knoweth. Centuries after, Stephen told all this to the Supreme Court of the Jewish Church, when he stood before them accused of speaking blasphemous words against the Holy Place and the Law ; and their answer was to gnash on him with their teeth, and cast him out of the city and stone him. Such an answer sufficed for Stephen, but it availed nothing against the legions of Titus. The teaching of Isaiah, of Jeremiah, of Stephen is needed still. Whenever we identify God with anything of His handiwork, when we think that His presence and power are limited to any shrine, relic, law or book, we materialise Him and become idolaters. This does not mean that it was not a good thing to have in its day brazen serpent, ark, tabernacle, temple or torah, but it does mean that the presence of God is not limited to any one symbol or shrine. We still need to hear the lofty words of the prophet addressed to the exultant Jews who had left Babylon with the pious but proud intention of rebuilding the house of Jehovah—" The heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool ; what is this for a house that ye are building me, and what is this for a place for my rest ? Yea, all these things my hand hath made, and so all these things came to be, saith the Lord ; but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word." Only to men of such spirit does God look now. Only with such does He dwell. They may not own a Bible, they may not be able to read, but if they know that God is love, and look up to Him crying, Abba Father, He hears them, floods their souls with life and light and leads them in a plain path from day to day. As in days of old, He took away from His people those precious things that

testify of Him, so will He take from us the Bible if we do not use it aright. He is taking it away, when we use it in the spirit of the Scribes, when we interpret it in the slavish spirit of traditionalism, when we regard it as a storehouse of texts wherewith to buttress sectarianism, instead of the living Word of the living God to our hungering and thirsting souls.

G. M. GRANT.

How to Read the Bible.

NO. 2.

Chillingworth's maxim, "the Bible and the Bible only is the religion of Protestants," cannot be accepted without explanation; but there is no doubt that the Reformers exalted the Scripture code to a position which it had never occupied before, and that it has been accepted ever since as of paramount authority by the great Protestant Churches. The greater is the need therefore that it should be universally read, understood and revered; and that all possible means should be taken to ascertain the fullness of its meaning. That was the position of the Reformers. They were the scholars of their day, in every country in Europe. They studied the Scriptures in the original Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, taking advantage of all the light and all the helps that the sixteenth century afforded. Attempts were made to prejudice the ignorant and the devout against them on this very account. Greek was represented to be a dangerous language, and as to Hebrew, it was well known, said one preacher to his congregation, "that all who learned it became Jews." But there soon came Lutheran's who had little of Luther's spirit. As the Duke of Wellington put it, "there is many a red-coat who is not a soldier." "The innovations of one age are always in danger of becoming the traditional fetters of the next," Dr. Rainy lately remarked. No better illustration of this can be found than in the attitude of the seventeenth or eighteenth as contrasted with that of the sixteenth century. In their very anxiety to exalt the Bible, many of the followers of the Reformers refused to seek further light as to its meaning, and they confused the two ideas of a code and the interpretation of a code. The Bible is the source of doctrine, but it can no more be the interpreter or judge to say what the doctrine is than the civil law can exercise the functions of a judge. We must ascertain the meaning of the Bible, not by authority but by the exercise of the faculties of human knowledge, quickened, as Christ has promised they shall be, by the Holy Spirit. We must use the same laws and principles of interpretation that we apply to the sacred books of other religions, and these are simply the principles used in the interpretation of all ancient docu-

ments. But, it may be said, the Bible is so plain that he who runs may read. To this, the *a priori* or, as Mr. Gladstone calls it, the "domineering" argument is sometimes added, that a book containing a revelation from God must as a matter of course be easily understood. If all that is meant is that the great truths of the Bible, whether its fundamental facts or ideas, can be readily grasped by all, the statement is not only true, but one to be gladly insisted upon. That is the very reason why we give it to the people. As Arnold well observes, if it is "hopelessly obscure," it is mockery to call it the "rule of faith." But if more is meant, then it must be pointed out that all parts of the Bible cannot be easily understood and cannot be read with profit by people who have no aids but their ordinary intelligence. It is not the fact that even skilled interpreters or great Churches have always understood its meaning. For centuries, everyone believed that the Scriptures taught that the earth was fixed in the centre of the universe. They were as sure of that as they were that Moses wrote the Pentateuch. We know how the Roman inquisitors treated Galileo for demonstrating the falsity of the geocentric theory, but we may not all know that the Protestant theologians of Germany would have treated the old monk Copernicus in the very same way, if they could only have laid their hands on him. The Church also interpreted the Scriptures as teaching that men who held erroneous views concerning God should be fined, imprisoned or killed. Men fighting for liberty, like the Presbyterians of Scotland and the Puritans of England, induced the Long Parliament to pass persecuting laws that we now read with wonder and horror. Only a century ago, it was considered a good reason to dissent from the Church of Scotland, that the Church had become so lukewarm that it no longer petitioned Parliament to put in force the laws against witchcraft, in clear defiance of the Scripture which said "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." So, too, men implicitly accepted as religious truths, that the universe was created in six days, that the earth was made six or seven thousand years ago, that man had existed on it only for that period, that creation took place by catastrophes rather than by development, that the flood was universal, and other dogmas which science has disproved or on which it alone can speak decisively. Savages, children, and illiterate people are quite sure that they come into immediate contact with external objects by their eyes, that they know distance by means of sight, that the sun revolves round the earth, that the firmament is a solid vault, that the earth is a great plain, and that a great many other things are just what they seem to them to be. Their ignorance is not fatal. Their knowledge is sufficient for all the purposes of daily life. But, if they are willing to learn, they can be taught gradually that much of their so called knowledge is made up of illusions. And, as their old mistakes are corrected and

discoveries of truth are made by them, their conceptions of the universe and of the wisdom, power and goodness of God are enlarged. Does not this suggest to us that there may be popular illusions also regarding the Bible. While knowing all that it is necessary to know in order to be saved, may not portions of our fancied Scripture knowledge be equally superficial, incomplete or erroneous, and, would not the truth widen our views, strengthen our faith and inspire our hearts with increased reverence and love?

At any rate, this is clear, that Protestantism must welcome scholarship and investigation in every direction as a condition of its life, and that a fearless Biblical criticism is the best proof that can be given of our reverence for the Bible. We have rejected Christian tradition as a source of authority in opposition to evidence external or internal, and we cannot implicitly accept Jewish tradition. We know from the New Testament what kind of men the Scribes and Rabbis were and we cannot accept them as trustworthy critics or infallible witnesses, especially with regard to events that happened in times far removed from their own or concerning matters on which they had strong preconceptions. Our minds must be open to truth from every side. We must be infinitely tolerant of theories that we dislike, when they are put forward by scholars as the best explanation they can offer of facts. The facts must be explained. Let us master them and suggest better theories. In this great work of truth-seeking, the lead is still held by Germany, that glorious land where truth is valued for its own sake as it is valued nowhere else. Germany, that gave us the Reformation, still seeks for truth with marvellous industry and honesty, and scouts the notion that truth needs any man's lie or enforced silence. Even destructive rationalistic theories, let us remember, were the inevitable recoil of the human mind against attempts to suppress it, to disrupt man into a thinking and believing being, and to insulate the truths of theology from thought and life, and allow them to lie bedridden in the memory. When the Bible is regarded as a collection of mysterious oracles to be received in unquestioning silence, then rationalism is the swing of the pendulum to the other extreme, an extreme, too, less degrading to man and less dishonouring to God than the other. We ask only that God's Word be left to its own inherent strength and that we should be allowed to take away all that binds or obscures it or otherwise prevents it from exerting its full power on our souls. All through this century new evidence has been coming into court that we never expected to get. We are becoming better acquainted with Hebrew and the cognate languages and dialects. We are able to study other religions in their original sources. Ancient history is being rewritten. Archæological allusions, that once were riddles, are understood. Criticism of language, style and thought has acknowledged canons. Allowance is made for the moral and literary ideas and cus-

toms of other times and lands. The mistakes and errors of editors, rabbis, transcribers, translators, interpreters and other well-meaning but very fallible people can now be discounted. Dr. Harper, editor of the Old and New Testament Student, referring to the misfortunes of the Bible from this last source, says "of all unfortunate books in the history of literature, in all respects, the most unfortunate is the Bible." Nothing shows the infinite strength of the divine element in it so strongly as the fact that it has survived those misfortunes. The evidence, moreover, that enables us to understand its full meaning, is being added to from day to day. We are in consequence on a vantage ground that no former age occupied. Thousands of investigators are working for us. England, Scotland and America have as yet made little use of the new sources of light, but they are awakening. It is high time; for as Dr Flint points out, "during the last fifty years, theologians in other lands have been building up almost from the foundation, entire theological sciences or disciplines. Not to speak of what they have done in biblical linguistics, exegetics and criticism, and in ecclesiastical history, they have raised into independent existence such sciences as Biblical theology, Comparative theology and Christian Ethics, which have perhaps almost as materially changed and increased theological knowledge, as geology and biology have during the same period changed and increased physical knowledge."

Thank God for all this. The Bible will become a greater power than ever it was before. We shall distinguish between the human in it and the divine, and the divine will, in consequence, shine with purer rays. We shall distinguish between the local and the universal and while that which is human or local will have value for us, just as every province of history has, the universal will be a priceless possession for ever unto humanity. We shall distinguish between the eternal idea and the temporary dress which the prophet borrowed from his own experience or the experience of his nation, and while we preserve the dress reverently in our museums, we shall enshrine the ideas in our souls, as the light and life which God in His great love has given to make earth like Heaven and human life sacred as the divine.

The general principles which I have laid down with regard to the duty of using every possible means and sparing no pains to ascertain what Scripture teaches will probably be accepted readily enough, but—that you may understand what is involved—it is only right that I should go more into detail and give examples of the gains that have accrued in consequence of recent critical and historical study. There is an uneasy feeling in some quarters that instead of gain there has been loss, and as I am profoundly convinced of the contrary, I shall select, from all three divisions under which the Scribes classified Old Testament literature, examples in connection with which this feeling is strongest. And first,—the Law. The traditional view is that the

Pentateuch, in the form in which we have it was written by Moses, whereas the view of the vast majority of competent critics is that the first six books of the Bible existed originally as four independent narratives, and that these were codified, probably by Ezra and his fellow-Scribes during the exile, into the one account that we now have. Suppose that this is established, an illustration from the possible fate of the Gospels is sufficient to prove that we have in consequence gained enormously. How often have we been thankful that, instead of one life of Christ, no matter by whom written, we have four! Well, what happened in the second century shows that we might have had only one. Tatian, a teacher of rhetoric, composed what we would call a Harmony of the four Gospels, known as the Diatessaron, and in writing it, he of course followed the literary methods of the East. He cut up and pieced together his four sources, adding words and phrases of his own so as to make one continuous story, and in doing so he paid little attention to the diversities, to chronological arrangement or other matters that a modern author would think of great importance. We learn too, from Theodoret, that he mutilated his sources to suit his Gnostic views. In spite of that, "the work was used not only by his own party, but also by those who followed the teaching of the Apostles, as they had not perceived the mischievous design of the composition, but in their simplicity made use of the book on account of its conciseness." Theodoret found more than two hundred copies in the churches of his diocese. He removed these and replaced them with the works of the four evangelists. Now, if the church in the second century had been like the church in Ezra's day, confined pretty much to one city and language, if the literary class had been confined to one guild of scribes, if Tatian had been a chief member of that guild and compiled his harmony honestly, in all probability his work would have been universally accepted and in consequence we would have had only one composite Gospel. Would that have been a gain? Certainly not. If, then, in the nineteenth century, scholars detected the patchwork and pointed out the differences between the four documents and in the main restored them, how would it have been possible to consider that a loss? This illustration seems to me conclusive. The Mosaic character of the Pentateuch as a whole is not lost by the discovery of its composite character, and the books will continue to be called "the books of Moses." The Psalms are "the Psalms of David," though according to the best modern judges most of them were written by other authors. The Proverbs will always be "the Proverbs of Solomon," though a cursory examination is sufficient to show that the book is composed of eight different sections, some, perhaps all of these, subsequent to Solomon's day. In each case the name of the man who was the original creative force, of the Law, the Psalter and the Wisdom Literature of the people of revelation, is rightly stamped on the

ultimate form into which each code or collection was cast ; and particularly as regards the Pentateuch, the Mosaic authorship of portions of it, and what is called its Egypticity, are acknowledged by all sober critics.

In the second place, take an example from one of the prophetic books. The traditional view is that Isaiah wrote all the sixty-six chapters in the book called by his name, whereas the vast majority of scholars believe that there is conclusive internal evidence to show that the author of the greatest part of the last twenty-seven chapters was a prophet who lived in Babylon during the exile. If Isaiah of Jerusalem wrote the sections that describe the political and social condition of the Jews during the captivity, their various phases of faith and unbelief, the hopes excited by the appearance of Cyrus on the stage of history, the prophecies of his success against the hitherto resistless Babylon and of Israel's return to rebuild the city and temple, the object of Jehovah in raising up Cyrus and the different pictures of the Servant of the Lord, we can only stand dumb before a miracle out of all relation to the prophet himself, to the time in which he lived and to our own reason. It may be said that God can make a man write history in advance or do anything else that He pleases. No one denies that, but Jehovah is not like the gods of the heathen. He is wise, Isaiah tells us, and does nothing in vain or for mere display. When a missionary points out to a Hindoo, how capricious and useless are the miracles that Ram is said to have performed, the answer is an appeal to the power of Ram or any other Incarnation of Vishnu. The Mahomedan, too, silences the unbeliever by the pious phrase, Allah is great ! In both cases, reason is ruled out of court. On the other hand, read any of the modern works on Isaiah, such as Cheyne's or Driver's, or, better still for popular reading, George Adam Smith's two volumes in the Expositor's Bible, and see how luminous the whole book becomes. It is brought into relation with our reason and our spiritual nature, as well as with the experience of the writer ; with our own time and all time ; and its inspiration has not to be dogmatically asserted, because it is felt. It is felt, however, not as something magical, but as the power of Jehovah working out His great purpose of redeeming love, through a chosen people in whose experiences inspired prophets saw the deep things of God and man. Cold indeed must the Christian be who can read such volumess without thanking God for the new truth that He is making to break forth out of His word.

With regard to the third collection of Old Testament literature, the part specially called the Scriptures, modern scholarship has thrown a flood of light on every book and roll. As an example of the gain to us, take the one little roll of the Song of Solomon. According to the Rabbis, it is an allegory teaching the mutual love of Jehovah

and Israel. According to Christian Rabbis, it is intended to teach the spiritual relations of Christ and the Christian. It is really a drama, celebrating by means of a story the power of true love. A peasant girl of northern Israel has been offered a place in Solomon's harem, and at last the King even offers her marriage. Without a mother and with unkind brothers, she is faithful to her betrothed, and Solomon in all his glory is baffled by pure love. The fact that such a poem was a product of the ninth century before Christ shows the influence that the religion of Jehovah had on Israel, the purity of its home life and the dignity of womanhood, which was understood at the time in no other corner of the world. What a tribute, too, to the comprehensiveness of God's book, that no false delicacy makes it overlook that mightiest passion of the heart which has been the inspiration to innumerable heroisms, and which when perverted has inflicted innumerable woes on mankind!

It may be asked here whether the novelties of interpretation to which I have been referring may not rob the plain man of the old Bible that has hitherto sustained his spiritual life? He is not acquainted with history or criticism, and how can he study the scores of volumes in which its results are found? I answer that he still has the old Bible and that there is nothing but gain for him besides. For instance, when he reads in the Pentateuch two accounts of the creation or of the deluge, or praises of Moses which Moses could not have written, or a list of the dukes that reigned in Edom "before there were any kings in Israel," or of places with names that were given to them after the conquest by Joshua, or other passages that once puzzled him, it is surely something that he can be now told that there is a satisfactory explanation of these things that he had formerly to accept, though they were unintelligible. Or again, let him master, as he can very easily, the book of Isaiah, with the helps that I have mentioned, and he will be so filled with joy at the new discoveries made to him of its beauty and power, that he will go on to study every other book in the Bible in the same way. He may not have time to investigate critical questions for himself, but that is no reason why others should not investigate or why he should not profit by their labours. The ordinary working man knows nothing of Physics and Biology, but it never occurs to him that therefore the book of nature should not be studied night and day. He knows, too, that in one way or another, he and all men will get some advantage from every discovery. Emphatically is this true of that marvellous literature which is called God's book because it is man's book. It must be studied fully and fearlessly, no matter what disturbances may result or may be feared. Those who drink its spirit most deeply know that they owe supreme allegiance to truth alone, that they dare not be false to it because they are told that temporary interests may suffer,

and that truth can be betrayed by mental slavery or by silence as truly as by speech. They know, too, that it is a mockery to call upon the politicians of the country to rise superior to party and sinister influences, and to dare to speak out when policy bids them keep silence, if the teachers of the Church of God do not show something of the same spirit.

I ask you then, my young friends, to use every means that this wonderful century puts in your power for ascertaining the full meaning of the Bible, to study it with intellects wide awake and hearts eager to commune with God, to reproduce the spirit of the holy men of old in your lives, and—as you have opportunity—to teach to others all the truth that you have made your own. I would not conceal from you that most men are impatient of new truth or new points of view; but if you have patience, reverence, self-control, as well as knowledge, they will listen, and in the end they will love you; for, depend upon it, truth, after all, is what the people in their inmost souls cry for, and the minister of truth will be revered by them as the true minister of God.

J. M. GRANT.

How to Read the Bible.

NO. 3.

We must avoid that idolatry of the letter to which human nature is always prone. We must fearlessly encourage historical and critical study and frankly accept their best results. I have tried to impress those lessons upon you. And now I can understand some one saying, all that you have told us is important, but is there not something more important? There is. Why should men study the Bible at all? Only in a minor degree for literary, historical or professional purposes. The all important question to ask them, is, have you sought to find God? If not, you have missed the mark. The great object of the Bible is to reveal the true God, the God of grace and judgment. It does this as no other book, no other literature does. Hence its altogether unapproachable value. Hence, too, the object you should keep before you every time that you turn to its pages. The one thing needful for a man is that he should find God. Until he finds Him, self will be the centre of his existence; and it would be little less absurd for a worm or a midge to fancy itself the centre of this wonderful universe than it is for the greatest king or queen on earth to indulge that fancy. Man is like a breath. His days are as a shadow that passeth away. But when he finds God, he learns his greatness and the glory of the universe. He rises above the bondage of self and the imperious demands of passion and desire.

He finds spiritual deliverance, pardon, strength, life and joy. This then is the lesson that I am most anxious to teach. In studying the Bible, bring your souls into contact with the living God whom it reveals.

The God of the Old Testament and of the New is one. It is the fashion to-day to distinguish between Jehovah and Jesus, as Sir Edwin Arnold, in "The Light of the World," does. He distinguishes between—"that God of Abraham mild to His own, but smiting enemies," "that Lord of Moses" or "that dread Jah," and the universal Father, revealed by Jesus. If this means that men from the time of Abraham conceived of God either as tribal or national, no one disputes it; but if it means more, it is not true. In revealing Himself to men, God must either raise those whom he chose as his organs or media of revelation to His level, or suit His communications to their faculties, and also to their times, conditions and circumstances. As He did not do the former, we know that He did the latter. But from first to last, He is the same, not yet fully understood, any more than the ordinary revelation that He gives of Himself in nature is fully understood. The God of Abraham, of Moses, of the prophets, and of Paul is one God, revealed in the Old Testament, by divers portions and in divers manners, and fully revealed in the Son of Man, who is the brightness of His glory and the express image of His Person. Studying the record of those revelations, we find that God has always been the Saviour and the Friend of man, and the lifting power in human history. There is not an epoch, from the beginning of that long historical movement which is the mirror of universal history and universal law to its consummation in Christ, in which our souls do not burn within us as we come in contact with Him. We know from the records on the Assyrian monuments, copied from much more ancient Akkadian inscriptions, that the Hamites who inhabited Babylonia up to the mountains of Armenia had attained to a high degree of civilization before Abraham's day; and old eastern stories tell us that the migration of the Shemite Abraham and his tribe from the head-waters of the Euphrates to the south-west was because of the idolatries of the people among whom he had lived. That is the human side of the movement which was the origin of the Church of God. The divine side is given in the Book of Genesis. Abraham "went out, not knowing whither he went." He had God as his Saviour and Friend, and so that far-off, dimly-discerned epoch had implicit within it the Messianic or Christian. "Your Father Abraham," said Jesus to the Jews, "rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it and was glad." Centuries pass away and the high thought that the God of their fathers is their Friend possesses a nation, so taking the only form in which, in those days, the idea could live. "That the Eternal God is the true deliverer is the fundamental thought of the Mosaic

economy," says Ewald. He is the deliverer because He is both loving and righteous. "Whereas, among all the other nations, there was not as yet one individual who grasped this thought of the divine spirit become the deliverance and life of the human spirit, here it not only exerts a living force over Moses, but becomes at the same time the possession and the innermost life of a whole people." This is the key to all that is best in the subsequent history of Israel. As Christians, we cannot sympathise with Deborah's exultation over Sisera's murder, or with the blessings she lavishes on Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite; but none the less, Deborah's faith in Jehovah preserved the light and the life of the world. Strange Saviours some of the judges between the days of Joshua and Samuel seem to us, but none the less they had the root of the matter in them and they did save Israel. For centuries, Jehovah had a controversy with Israel, for as He says, "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself"; but the divine features of His character came out to them more and more clearly, and at last were wrought into the spiritual life of that saving remnant of the people of whom the prophets were the consummate flower. Each step in that long process in which He "drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love," each stage of that marvellous development is worthy of the most patient study. All the time we are in a school in which God is the patient and perfect teacher of erring children. When we come to the pages of the evangelical prophet or to Psalms in which still later singers rapturously recite the loving-kindness of Jehovah, it seems impossible that the heart of man can know, or his tongue tell, more of the essence of God's character or of His wondrous identification of Himself with His people. He trusts these poor children with the heroic confidence with which love refuses to believe any ill of its object—"For He said, surely they are my people, children that will not deal falsely; so he was their Saviour. In all their affliction, He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bore them and carried them all the days of old." And yet, all this was only preparatory to the full revelation of God. We have to wait till we come to the Incarnation and the Cross before we know the heart of God, all that He is and that He is willing to do for us, all the depth of our sin and our spiritual weakness. "When we were yet weak, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."

It is from this high point, from this observatory of the universe, that we have to review the past and look down the long aisles of the future; that we have to study the Bible and the history of the church and the work that lies before ourselves. Deliverance from the life of self which is death, spiritual light and strength are what man has always needed and what he needs to-day as much as ever. The Bible is the record of how God has given these with Himself to man, and of how

He has given to us His Son, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. He who studies the Bible from any lower point of view than this is likely to miss that which makes it of inestimable value to seekers after God. It may be that we have here the reason why some scholars, who have investigated the difficult questions of Biblical Introduction with admirable truth-loving spirit and taught us much in consequence, have themselves failed to find Him to whom the whole volume points, and who is found readily by the meek and lowly in heart.

Before closing this series of addresses, I must endeavour to give you a glimpse, for I can do little more, of how it is that Christ's death, more than anything else, infuses spiritual strength into the weak and delivers them from the power of sin. Suppose that the Queen of our world-wide Empire had constitutionally all the power of the Czar, and having purposed to do something great for this land, had invited us to co-operate with her; but that we disbelieving her, or not caring for her wishes, or not thinking that our prosperity could be advanced by anything she could do, went on in our old way of life, each engrossed with his own little matters, glad when things turned out as we had planned and grieved when they went against us. Now, if at this time she did something that captivated our hearts and made us sympathise with the object she was cherishing, the result would be that we would fall in with her ideas and make them our own. We would be filled with her aims and thoughts and all our resources would be thrown into the common stock. We would be raised out of self-seeking to a higher plane of life. We would have faith in her, and that faith would be one with love, and we would hope with a strength proportioned to our faith and love for the accomplishment of that high object on which her heart and ours was set. Does this illustration help you to conceive of the way in which the death of Jesus drew to God the great apostle of the Gentiles and lifted him out of the dead religiosity in which he had spent his life? Previously, he had been apparently a profoundly religious man, but he was self-seeking to the core; apparently enlightened, he was in darkness; apparently zealous for Jehovah, he was a blasphemer. He had practised self-denial, to the extent of doing violence to the best instincts of his nature, because he believed that duty so ordered. What was the motive with him all this time? His thoughts never went beyond self. His object was to acquire for himself God's favour, and the best way of securing that was to advance the interests of the church. He was faultless in the eyes of others and for a time his own conscience was at rest, lulled by the zeal and activity of a life that fancied itself in accord with God. But he had a noble nature, notwithstanding the self-seeking natural to man. The higher law asserted its claims, and a discord arose between it and the lower law that he had been obeying. It was "hard for him

to kick against the goads." In this way he was prepared for that revelation of the Christ to and in him that made him a new man. Thereafter, Christ was to him the centre of the world's history and of his own life. His different epistles show developments in his theology into which I cannot enter now ; but at all times he could say from the heart, " The life that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me." To Paul, as truly as to John, Christ was seen to mediate from all eternity the unseen God to the universe. Man, therefore, being sick, it became Him in the fulness of time to reveal God as a physician. Man being sinful, it was necessary that he should come as a Redeemer. He is a perfect Mediator between God and man, because He has the natures of both. As our Head, He takes upon Him all our sickness and sin. And not only does the head receive all the pains of its members, but it also communicates its life to them. The truth of His headship explains His death and our life, His atonement and our repentance, His love and the strength we receive. All this is not only what is called a truth of faith. It is susceptible of verification whenever and wherever the conditions are complied with. It is the central fact of every christian's life. Our life reproduces His. We are, through our union to Him, redeemed from self and sin, and there is in each of us " a well of water springing up into everlasting life." This view of the work of Christ, along with his insight into the incurable weakness of his own spiritual nature, enabled Paul to present in his epistle to the Romans the first philosophy of universal history that we have. All men are sinners and unable to save themselves. Man can never purify his nature by making self-culture the final end. But God has come to seek and save him in Jesus Christ. United to Him by faith we have a new life, the characteristics of which are hope and love. Even if losses and crosses come, we rejoice. These trials test us and give us experience and hardihood. Each new victory makes our hope increase, and so we are gradually emancipated from the bondage of self-seeking. Here is the secret of existence—a man finds himself when he finds Christ.

What happened in Paul's case has been reproduced in every generation since in the experience of millions. We find in the cross the pardon of sin and the removal of the sense of guilt. We receive a life that is a daily repenting and a daily rising to newness of life. And what the Lord does for us now, we know to be only an earnest of what He will do, for hope is always combined with faith. Strictly speaking, hope has reference to the future and faith to the past and present. We are accustomed to associate uncertainty alike with hope and faith, because in the ordinary affairs of life both rest on probable evidence. But, make God the witness as to what He has done and is, and make Him the Promiser of what He will do, and all uncertainty

is removed. Faith then becomes the anchor of the soul and gives us victory over the world. We are saved by hope and hope never puts to shame, never disappoints, because God's love is poured forth in our hearts. Thus furnished internally, every christian ought to be filled with calm confidence and quenchless enthusiasm as the great Apostle himself. There is a great work for him to do in life, however obscure his position may be. His language, as he looks forward, should be that which so often inspired General Gordon in moments of gloom :—

“ I go to prove my soul !
I see my way as birds their trackless way.
I shall arrive ! What time, what circuit first,
I ask not : but
In some time, His good time, I shall arrive ;
He guides me and the bird. In His good time.”

But, how many christians have this strong, buoyant faith ? As far as I see, the majority, even of ministers, elders and church members, are still where Paul was in his days of bondage. There is no spiritual strength, no joy, no hope in them. They are apparently religious. To use an expression which may be heard in some circles, they have “ got religion,” but it is a religion of fear and constraint, of profitless strivings and observances. The great motive with a christian of this type is to have his soul saved, not a holy sympathy with God's heart that springs from believing that God has saved him and will have all men to be saved, and from the sure hope that He will finish His work. His hope is not a hope that purifies, that ennobles, that makes him hate everything low, mean and base, that inspires to heroic waiting, suffering and doing, but a hope that he shall not be punished in the future. His faith is not that which makes him mount up with wings as eagles, but a faith that makes him serious. True faith is based on the love of God to us, and it causes a man to sing at his work and stay himself on the promises in the hour of sorrow and trial. True hope is based on the love of God, and having this hope, we anticipate our own perfection and the purity of heaven with eager longings. We open our hearts wide for the entrance of that spirit which is the earnest of our glorious inheritance. All thoughts and systems of selfishness are swept away. While patiently waiting for the glory that is to be revealed, we occupy the present like men to whom such hopes are dear, and our hearts will never be satisfied until God's great object of the final reconciliation of heaven and earth is fully accomplished.

The Church, too, is often like the Jewish Church of which Paul was so distinguished a member. It may show vehement zeal. It may have a proud orthodoxy that induces something like contempt

for other churches. Its chief aim then is to make proselytes, to be the first in the land, to multiply congregations, stations and ministers, and to have satisfactory statistics.

O God named Love, whose power Thou art !
Thy crownless church before Thee stands,
With too much hating in its heart,
And too much striving in its hands.

O for loftier aims on the part of the individual and the Church ! To realize the highest that is in us, to be a salt to the nation and the world, until the nation's heart throbs as the heart of its most high-souled son or daughter, and the world thankfully acknowledges its debt to the nation,—with no lower ambitions than these can we be satisfied. But alas ! how can the Church, as it is at present, do anything ? Instead of being that which unites, it is that which divides the nation. No wonder that so often it is satisfied with seeking its own, and with giving letters of credit on the next world instead of fitting men for citizenship in this world where alone it is appointed to do its work. People fancy that they can buttress, that they can make impregnable the Church, with numbers, political support, great buildings, wealth, orators, music, culture, and what not ! All these can be honey-combed and a gust of infidelity can sweep them away. Spiritual reality alone will stand. When we have that strength, men will believe in us and in the Lord. When men see christians giving heed to and craving after the external, even should the external objects on which their heart is set have a religious aspect, they see only human nature. But the faith that the prophets had, the faith that the Apostles and Martyrs had, the faith and hope of the Master, this is not of the earth. It is something that "was before the elements and that owes no homage to the Sun." It is a force that no microscope, no crucible can detect, but a force absolute, unqualified and illimitable. Oh ! let the world see this, and it is dumb—or when voice is given, it cries, "this is the great power of God," and it bows its head and does homage.

G. M. GRANT.

The Ideal Life.*

NO. 4.

Matthew v, 48: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect."

These words express the ideal of the Christian life. They set before our minds a standard of duty that seems to be absolutely and for ever beyond our reach. Conscious as we all are of our sins and limitations, how can we dare even to aspire after it? Will not the infinite altitude to be scaled call up in us an emotion of hopelessness and despair, and paralyze our best efforts? Were the ideal set before us finite; were we simply told to make the most of our natural powers, to equip ourselves at all points for the work of life, to acquire the knowledge and the practical experience that go to make the good citizen, and to adorn ourselves with the graces of culture and refinement; we should feel that, although much was expected of us, we yet were not commanded to realize the unrealizable. But no such limited ideal is presented to us. To be perfect is to attain the infinite. Is it not, then, worse than presumption for a weak and erring mortal to aim at infinity? In the idea of the faultless perfection of God are embodied all the highest elements which the united thought of our race has been able to conceive; and not only so, but we are conscious that in our best moments we cannot grasp even in idea all that infinitude which is summed up and realized in Him. The perfection of God includes the idea of an absolutely holy will—a will in which there is no conflict, no disharmony, no evil, but only the free and spontaneous expression of goodness. It implies an infinite tenderness, that admits no faintest taint of selfishness, no harsh or discordant note to mar its faultless harmony. It means an intellectual vision that flashes over all the heights and depths of being; a vision that sees the whole universe at a glance, and is free from the haze of the past, and the unrealized vacuity of the future. The realization of perfection, as thus conceived, is manifestly impossible for man.

Yet, is there not a sense in which the ideal of infinite perfection is not altogether unattainable? Nay, is there not a sense in which it is attainable just because it is infinite? The ideal of the Greek was a finite ideal. It consisted in the perfect flexibility, grace and symmetry of the body; in culture and refinement; and in simple devotion to one's own country. Such an ideal is not to be despised. It contains in germ the higher ideal of Christianity, for it is the glory of our religion that it has absorbed into itself all the higher elements of the

*This address was delivered three years ago. It has been included in the present series by request.

ethnic religions, and expanded them to infinity. What the best minds of Greece conceived to be the true life of man Christianity accepts, but it gives to it a new and higher meaning. The Greek was not wrong in attaching importance to the perfection of the body, and in viewing physical training as essential to the production of the efficient citizen. He was not wrong in saying that knowledge and culture and refinement help to lift a man above the grossness of sense. Nor was he wrong in his devotion to the state. The weakness of Greek civilization lay rather in this, that it put culture in place of duty, the life of refinement for the life of the spirit; and therefore it never grasped the principle which enables man to be a "fellow-worker with God." Not every one has by nature a strong and healthy body, which he can train to flexibility and grace. Not every one can live the life of the scholar, or throw himself untrammelled into affairs of state. Therefore the civilization of Greece, with all its brilliancy, raised up an impassable barrier between the strong and the weak, the rich and the poor, the cultured and the uncultured, between master and slave, man and woman. The very same people that has bequeathed to the race faultless products of art, and that first taught the world the meaning of a political constitution, degraded the sacredness of womanhood, and desecrated humanity in "the slave, the scourge, the chain." And all this arose from its finite ideal of human life—an ideal that was attainable, not by all men, but only by the few who were privileged in birth, in culture and in the possession of worldly goods. The wisdom of the Greek was, in St. Paul's language, "in word, not in power." Even the universal benevolence of later Stoicism, which in form seems so similar to the Christian idea of universal brotherhood, was in its spirit essentially different; for the Stoic was tainted with a personal pride in his own righteousness, and a haughty disdain of others. His cosmopolitanism arose rather from self-isolation, indifference and contempt than from love. Christianity, on the other hand, strikes at the roots of all self-righteousness by presenting, as what the divine man in us demands, the standard of absolute perfection. Thus it breaks down the middle-wall of partition between Jew and Gentile, Greek and barbarian, bond and free. Whether free or in chains, a man may be the Lord's freeman. The ideal is not to be found realized in the princes of this world, but in him who is of a humble and contrite spirit. The work of a man is not to be measured by his attainments or social position, but by the measure in which the Holy Spirit dwells in him. The ideal is not culture and refinement, but "holiness unto the Lord." A man whose bodily presence may be weak and contemptible, and whose language may be rude and ungrammatical, may yet be realizing the ideal; while the man of culture, in his pride and vain-glory, is immersed in the life of the flesh. Have we not all experienced a saving feeling of humiliation in the presence of some simple,

self-denying Christian, who unconsciously showed us by his example what it is to "walk in the spirit?" It is not what we do or acquire that constitutes true religion, but the spirit in which we live. Thus we get some idea how the chasm between the infinite and finite is bridged. We become "perfect even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect," just in so far as we abandon our self-seeking, natural self, and give entrance into our hearts to the spirit of God, so that it may "flow through our deeds and make them pure." Is it not true, that it is our sins, and nothing else, that separate us from God? When we open our ears to the pleadings of the Holy Spirit, with what a sense of completeness we are visited! Light from heaven pours its radiance into our souls, and summons into being the consciousness of what in our inmost nature we really are. Then it is that the veil of sense is rent in twain, and we have a vision of that perfection which is summed up and realized in God.

The perfection, then, of which our Lord spoke consists in a sanctified will. The simplest task that is done in the right spirit is a means of realizing it. But while this is true, we must not make it a pretext for sitting down in indolence, as if we had attained or were already perfect. Responsibility grows with privilege. The ideal is complete realization, perfection, and nothing short of that must be our constant aim. He who means to take his place in the community as a leader or teacher of men, must test himself by a more exacting standard than others. More is demanded of us, with our exceptional advantages and privileges, than can be expected from those who share less in the gifts of God. We are in a great measure free from the anxieties and cares, that furrow the brow and sadden the heart of many; we are free to appropriate the garnered wisdom of the ages; and therefore it is our duty as well as our privilege to "search for knowledge as for hidden treasure," and to aim at the development of the higher faculties which minister to the good of others.

Mr. Matthew Arnold has told us that "conduct is three-fourths of life." From this proposition I am compelled to dissent. Conduct is not *three-fourths* of life, but the *whole* of life. There is no form of human activity that may not minister to the growth of the spiritual life; there is none that may not lead to spiritual death. Religion takes hold of man at all points. It must not be limited in its sovereignty to what is called practical life; in fact the distinction of the theoretical from the practical life has no basis in the nature of things. There is *will* present in all the modes in which man realizes himself; will, in fact, is the man himself. The man of science is not turning away from God because he is engaged in the study of what we call nature. The visible world is not the highest manifestation of God, but it does manifest Him. "O, God," said the reverent Kepler, "I think Thy thoughts after Thee!" The material universe is not a dead

machine, but, to him who has a mind to think and a heart to feel, it is saturated with the life and love of the Father. It was one of the false ideas of the middle ages, that to study nature was to turn away from the life of holiness. The separation of nature from God is but a disguised form of atheism. Nature is His visible garment. It is the great temple which enshrines the living God. This "cathedral of immensity" has been fashioned by Our Father, and its use is not to hide but to reveal Him. The innumerable host of heaven, which he has "hung aloft the night," reflect the radiance of His countenance. The perfect harmony and law which join together in the nicest bonds the infinitely small and the stupendously great, the nearest with the most remote, are but the outward form which His shaping intelligence has imposed. In the immeasurable stretches of space, thick with stars, and in the eternal procession of the years, are reflected the infinity of the Ancient of Days. To him who stands with bowed head, in the contemplation of this spectacle of infinite sublimity, comes an emotion of awe and reverence which testifies that he is in the presence of the Most High. Nature does not conceal God from the devout mind, but reveals His majesty. And the perfect organic unity which pervades all nature is a type of that perfection of bodily organism at which it is our duty to aim. Our bodies must be made a "temple of the Holy Ghost." The Greek erred in making perfection of bodily grace an end in itself; our religion demands that we should take all due pains to fashion our bodies into more perfect instruments of a sanctified will. The discharge of our higher duties is interfered with if our bodies are weak and ailing. As our heavenly Father expresses His will in the infinite nicety with which all parts of the visible universe are linked together, so ought we to keep our bodies in the utmost health and strength. No doubt some higher call of duty may demand the sacrifice of our health, as it may call upon us to give up even life itself; but, in the absence of such unusual claims upon us, religion demands the utmost care for our physical well-being. The perverted piety of the mediaeval monk is contrary to the ideal of the Christian life. It was but a refined form of egoism, or at least a misconception, which led him to practise self-mortification for its own sake. At any rate, it is a higher form of Christian faith to reverence that delicate instrument of the spirit which is one of the precious gifts of God.

But if perfection of the body is an end which we ought diligently to seek, how much more ought we to strive for a true insight into the nature of things. Here again we must get rid of the mediaeval taint that is apt to infect our idea of the Christian life. Religion is not limited to the symbols of Christian fellowship or to the performance of certain ordinances, although these are important in helping to keep alive its sacred flame. We must learn to include in our conception

all the activities by which, in realizing ourselves, we seek to attain to perfection. Christianity does not allow of any opposition of secular and sacred. None of the modes in which, in the true spirit, we realize our self-consciousness are "common or unclean." The mediaeval idea, for instance, that to devote oneself to the study of society and the state is to turn away from the religious life, is a blasphemy against God, who in the self-conscious intelligence of man expresses His essence. In every discovery of a law of nature we deepen our consciousness of the infinite wisdom of God. The more thoroughly we comprehend the constitution of the state, the better are we able to love our brother, and to promote his well-being. At no time perhaps in the history of the world has it been so incumbent upon us to study the laws of society. The reign of cast and privilege is over, happily never to return. The voice of God, speaking in thunder through civil wars and revolutions, or gently in the gradual and peaceful development of industry and commerce, has at last convinced all men who think and feel that the foundation of a permanent state is the Christian law of love. Theoretically at least we admit this truth, however we may violate it in practice. In the earlier ages, and especially in the far East, it seemed to be of divine appointment that *one* man should enslave a whole people, and use them as instruments of his selfishness and lust of power. Greece and Rome taught our race that *some* at least must curb the despotic sway of one, and that every citizen had his inalienable rights and privileges. The Teutonic race, accepting our Christian faith, grasped the idea that the state is for the good of *all*, not of one, nor even of some. But very much yet remains to be done in the practical application of this idea. It is only now that the claims of those who toil and spin, spending their strength to supply us with food and raiment, and all the appliances that set us free to devote ourselves to other tasks, have begun to receive the attention they deserve. It is to the shame of us all, that we have been *forced* to listen to their claims; and even now we think much more of the means by which we or our party are to be kept in power, than of the ends of government. Too often, in recklessness or selfishness, we legislate for a few, not for all. We forget that the end of the state is to enable every man—not the "greatest number," but *every* man—to realize the best that is in him. If it is necessary, for the highest development of our race, that so many men should be devoted to hard, wearing, mechanical occupations, at least our religion demands of us that we who aspire to lead and to teach should spare no pains to understand the structure of society, and to devise more perfect forms of social and political life where the present forms are decaying or effete. In securing such knowledge, provided only we hold it, as we ought to hold all things, as a sacred trust to be used in furthering the well-being of all, we shall be preparing ourselves for the crisis when we are called upon to act.

In the same spirit of love let all our studies be carried on. If we come to them in the right way, literature and art will bring us ever nearer to a comprehensive view of the mind of God. For, in tracing the growth of these delicate products of self-conscious energy, we shall find that, taught of God, men have been attaining an ever greater fullness of spiritual utterance. But here, as in all other cases, indolence and vanity and indifference may destroy all the value of the lesson. Let us be rid of the superficial notion, that the only use of literature and art is to give us more agreeable sensations. Dante tells us that the writing of his *Divina Commedia* "made him lean for many years." Every great work of genius is the fruit of immense toil, immense patience, and unselfish devotion. How then can we, with our feebleness of imagination and our immature intellect, expect to learn without effort the lesson which the masters have toiled so hard to acquire?

But it cannot be too strongly insisted upon, that the Christian ideal cannot be realized at all unless in all our seeking we are seeking after God. Without the spirit of Christ the care of the body will be used as a cloak for self-indulgence, and for the neglect of our higher duties; without it increase of knowledge will only minister to self-conceit, and put in our hands a more powerful engine of evil. The study of social laws we may wrest to our own destruction and the injury of others, by using our knowledge to play on the passions, the weaknesses and the follies of others. Literature and art may become for us but food for an all-pervasive vanity, or they may be employed to titillate our mental palates, as the epicure dallies with the delicate bouquet of a rare and choice wine. Thus we shall sin against the Holy Ghost, and crucify the Lord of Glory afresh. When the higher gifts of God are made panders to selfishness, a man's soul becomes the home of unclean spirits. Hold ever before your eyes the cross of Christ. "He that loveth his life shall lose it." Strive in the strength of God to keep yourselves free from vice, free from self-indulgence, free from self-righteousness. Do not forget that we may be weak and selfish in our thinking as well as in our ordinary duties. We are all agreed that no man can live the higher life who sins against the great moral laws, and violates the "tender charities of husband, son or brother." But we are apt to under-estimate the more subtle temptation that comes to the solitary thinker in his search for truth. Here, as always, we must be scrupulously veracious. We must follow truth wherever it may lead us, not adopting rashly any new or popular view, but trying all things and holding fast that which is good. Then "you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Beware of insincerity in your thinking, no less than in your doing. No untruth, however venerable it may be by age or with whatever false brilliancy it may shine, can ever really tend to the glory of God. Such perplexities as are incidental to the

quest for truth, especially in a critical age like this, you must be prepared to face manfully, as you would face the other trials of life. They cannot touch the centre of spiritual life. As time goes on you will find that life in some ways grows ever sadder and more solemn, but you will also find, I hope, that it holds in it the sacred joy of a life that is "hid with Christ in God."

These weak and stammering words, as I well know, are all too inadequate to the high theme of which I have, perhaps rashly, ventured to speak. I can only hope that I have been able to suggest to you in some measure the conception of life which I believe with my whole soul to be in essence the eternal truth of God. We who are older do not expect you to look at things with the graver eyes of those who are so much your seniors, but it is a comfort to us who have the privilege of guiding you by paths of knowledge that we have ourselves traversed before you, to see how impressed you are with the supreme importance of a self-surrender to the service of God and your fellow-men. I hope I shall not be accused of desiring to quell your religious ardour if I remind you, that no man can permanently influence others for good unless he has put away from him all vanity and vain-glory and self-righteousness. Remember that we have no right to teach others if we are not ourselves taught of God. At the immature stage of thought and experience in which at present most of you are, your duty, as a rule, is silence. Remember the fate of John Bunyan's Mr. Talkative. Every man who aspires to teach must first go away into the wilderness, there to commune with God and his own soul. Take infinite pains to equip yourselves worthily for the battle of life. Be not too easily satisfied. Now is the time to prepare your armour; soon enough you will be called upon to try it in active warfare. Be sure that in what you choose for your life-work you have not only zeal, but zeal according to knowledge; be sure that you have the peculiar gifts, without which your energies will be misdirected and wasted; and, above all, be sure, if you adopt one of the higher callings, that you do not allow yourselves to become the slaves of routine and habit, or to be debased by egotism in proportion to your outward success. Let it not be said;

"His honor in dishonor rooted stood,
And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true."

May our Father which is in heaven be with you always, and give to you abundantly of the infinite perfection of His spirit!

JOHN WATSON.

Christianity and Modern Life.

NO. 5.

An eminent English man of science is reported to have said that if he were about to introduce a new religion into the British Islands he did not think that Christianity would be that religion. I confess that on first reading this remarkable confession of faith, I was struck with surprise. I had been accustomed to think of Christianity as the central fact of all time. In it, as I believed and still believe, all the scattered rays of religious truth were concentrated in one intense point and flashed forth over the whole history of man. I had imagined that to the Christian religion might be applied the sublime words of the old Hebrew prophet: "And it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it." And now I was asked to believe that the rising tide of modern thought threatened to carry it away. Evidently, to this enlightened man of science, Christianity meant something very different from what it meant to me.

What then was in his mind when he said that he would hesitate to introduce Christianity into the British Islands? Perhaps it may be suggested that exclusive devotion to the study of nature had dimmed his eyes and dried up the currents of religious emotion in his breast, or that by an illegitimate extension of natural law to the spiritual world he had reduced the life and thought of man to a dead play of mechanical forces? I shall not venture to deny that either, or both, of these explanations may be partially correct; but I think that the main explanation of his opposition to what he regarded as Christianity must be sought in a different direction. For a similar view has been taken by two thinkers whose lives were devoted not to science, but to those studies which are usually supposed to make men quickly responsive to the spiritual interests of their kind.

In the earlier phases of his faith, Goethe, the great representative of the modern spirit, felt what he called with a certain exaggeration a "truly Julian hatred of Christianity." And Hegel, the greatest of modern philosophers, was in his youth inclined to hold that Christianity had obscured and hindered the spread of the true conception of life which had been presented to the world by the people of Greece. And as the greatest poet and the greatest philosopher of modern times have charged Christianity with hostility to the onward march of modern thought, so the greatest living novelist maintains that the march of modern thought is hostile to Christianity. The religion of Jesus, says Tolstoi, demands submission to evil, self-effacement, simplicity of

life; whereas the whole edifice of modern society is based upon resentment of evil, self-assertion and luxury. It cannot therefore be wrong to assume that there is at least an apparent antagonism between the modern spirit and the spirit of Christianity, and perhaps I cannot better fulfill the task which you have assigned to me than by asking whether the alternative of Christianity or modern civilization is not false; whether it may not be that so far from being hostile to the great movement of modern thought, Christianity is in reality its informing and ennobling spirit.

I am not aware that the man of science to whom I have referred ever revised his hasty judgment, but it is significant that the maturer creed of the two great representatives of modern literature and modern philosophy was a criticism of the earlier. In the *Wanderjahre*, Goethe recognizes in Christianity, as the religion which teaches "reverence for that which is beneath us," the highest of all religions. The recantation of Hegel was still more decided. Not only did he come to regard the Greek spirit as lower than the Christian, but in an application of the Christian principle, "Die to live," he found the solution of every problem of modern thought. Of Tolstoi we cannot say that he has returned upon himself, but we may say I think that he has at last developed his creed to the point at which we can see it accomplish its own destruction. By a narrow and uncritical interpretation of the New Testament he has constructed a theory which is hostile not merely to modern life, but to all life. First denying all the bonds which hold society together, he has at last attacked the sacred institution of the family. Only one more step remains for him to take: to counsel the existing race of men not to wait for their inevitable extinction, but to follow at once the example of the Gadarene swine. A race that has no right to exist, should not continue to exist. It can only be from weak irresolution that men cling to life themselves, after seeing it to be their duty to abstain from having successors. From the pages of a book, which in every line breathes the spirit of joyous confidence in the goodness and love of God, Tolstoi has contrived, by a method that would make nonsense of any literary product in the world, to extract the most dismal of all creeds. Once again the divorce of religion from life has demonstrated its self-contradiction and nullity.

I have said that Goethe and Hegel in their first mind conceived of Christianity as antagonistic to that great movement of modern thought, which, unlike Tolstoi, they believed to be onward and upward. Wherein they conceived the antagonism to consist they have not left us in doubt. Christianity, they said, with the rash doctrinairism of youth, is essentially a religion of the other world; it tells men to despise all earthly interests and to think of nothing but how to save their souls; it conceives of God as an external creator and

governor, removed from the whole sphere of man's life and activity. Such a religion, they maintained, must be hostile to the whole progress of the race. If it were reduced to practice it would put an end to all individual, social and political development; for men whose entire interest is in another world cannot take seriously the concerns of this world. A religion of this type can only produce a morbid and unhealthy spiritualism. It may teach men how to die, it can never teach them how to live. It is the religion of the mystic, the dreamer, the fanatic, not the religion of men with a firm hold on facts. Can it be seriously believed that a life of honest industry is a life of degradation; that enthusiasm for truth, the unwearied cultivation of the higher faculties, unselfish devotion to one's country and to humanity, rank lower in the sight of God than the enervating transports of a sentimental piety? How much more grandly did the ancient Greek conceive of life! His energies were not wasted in a morbid brooding over the joys and terrors of a future world, but he gave the best proof of spiritual sanity in his public spirit and his enthusiasm for all that is great and beautiful and true. For him religion was but the idealized picture of a noble human life; here and now he found enough to inspire him with resolution and to call out his highest energies.

I think we must admit that if Christianity were what it is here assumed to be, its antagonism to the modern spirit would be absolute and invincible. For of that spirit it is characteristic that it is in dead earnest with the things of this world. To the conscientious artizan who feels a glow of triumph when he has done a good honest piece of handiwork; to the great captains of industry who direct the instruments by which thousands are enabled to triumph over the material forces that are ever working for man's destruction; to the man of science, conscious that by wresting from nature the secret of her laws, he puts into the hands of his fellows weapons which help to subdue misery and vice; to the literary man, the poet, the artist, who by hard toil penetrate to the deeper meaning of human life; to the lonely thinker, intent on formulating a consistent theory of the world that shall destroy the paralyzing influence of doubt and dissipate intellectual chaos; to each and all of these, that must seem a false and hateful creed which proclaims unselfish devotion to the cause of humanity to be a blunder and a sin, and the ideal life of man a sheltered quiet and seclusion remote from the storms and tempests of the work-a-day world.

But does Christianity give any countenance to what Goethe well calls "the blasphemous doctrine that all is vanity?" Does it tell us to despise the active life of industry, the no less active life of scientific discovery, artistic creation and philosophical reflection? The exact opposite is the truth. No religion has affirmed with the same energy

and decisiveness as Christianity, that in the enthusiasm of humanity lies the secret of deliverance from the crushing weight of individual responsibility. It tells men that the misery, the vice, the spiritual degradation of the whole race is their own misery, their own vice, their own spiritual degradation. He who seeks to save his life shall lose it. It is by taking upon himself, in the energy of faith, the sins of the whole world that the individual is freed from the consciousness of guilt. He no longer goes about to establish his own righteousness. The joys and sorrows, the triumphs and failures of his brethren are his. Thus is he crucified, raised and exalted with Christ. Forgetting himself he finds himself; strong in the faith that "all things work together for good to them that love the Lord" he becomes a "fellow worker with God," and in devotion to the commonweal he "fills up the sufferings of Christ."

The false assumption that Christianity is a religion only of the other world has arisen from a confusion of one aspect of it with the whole. This was the radical weakness of the mediaeval spirit. Religion, it was then supposed, had no concern with secular life: only in the passionless tranquillity of the cloister could men be liberated from evil; trade and commerce, scientific investigation, independent speculation, even patriotism, were all unholy. The middle ages was an unhappy period in the history of the world. It was a time of sharp and abrupt contrasts. A fierce and lawless nobility, continually at war with each other, obstructed the peaceful development of industry and commerce; the violence and caprice of the master had as their counterpart the slavery, the subservience, the wretchedness of the serf; in the laity religion was a superstition, in the clergy an instrument of spiritual domination, or an unreal pietism. But we must not forget that even in this period of lawless violence, abject submission and spiritual slavery, the power of Christianity could not be entirely suppressed. It was not in vain that to the turbulence of a factious nobility was opposed the gentleness and unworldliness of a St. Francis. The one extreme was a criticism of the other. The industrious burgher learned that in every-day life there was a lower and a higher, and in devotion to his trade or calling he planted the seeds of patriotism and of a healthy civic life; the monk, by his simple and self-denying life, was a living protest against the brutalizing influence of a purely material ideal. Yet it remains on the whole true, that religion in divorce from secular life did not transform the world into its own image, but let it go its own wise way, and occupied itself only with the visionary and unreal. The noble, looking upon religion as a thing apart, could one day stab his friend to the heart, and the next compound with heaven by an external penance; the clergy too often perverted religion into a dead formalism and a superstition. All this had to be changed, and with the modern spirit the change has come.

And how has it come, but by a reversion to the pure teaching of Christianity which in the middle ages had been obscured or lost? The Christian faith is most simply expressed by saying that it affirms the infinite love of God to man and the blessedness of a correspondent love of man to God. This was an absolutely new revelation. The fierce and savage gods of the early Celt or Teuton, the vague and shadowy Infinite of the higher Brahmanism of India, the refined but cold and unloving gods of Greece, the austere national god of the Jewish people, differ fundamentally from the Christian God of love. The Celt or Teuton, engaged in a mortal combat with an enemy as truculent as himself, naturally conceived of the God of the tribe as exulting in the bloody triumphs of his worshippers. The speculative Brahman, contemplating life from the unsympathetic standpoint of a spectator, seemed to see in the restless flux of all terrestrial things, in the ceaseless tread of generation after generation on its way to dusty death, the nothingness of all movement, life and thought; and therefore he imagined that all things were but phantoms and shadows, concealing the great unchangeable Unity of which nothing can be said but that it is. The Greek, with his quick artistic temperament, his passion for all the arts that refine and beautify life, his enthusiastic devotion to his own little state, fashioned his gods after his own image and conceived of them as calm, rational, beautiful, but never with a heart of love. And the Jew, touched as no other ancient people ever was touched with the infinite value of moral rectitude, and thereby separated from the sensuous and pleasure-loving nations by which it was his sad fate to be successfully overcome and politically enslaved—the Jew conceived of God as the righteous Judge of the earth, who took stern vengeance on the enemies of Israel, though to his chosen people he displayed even in his chastisements the compassion of a Father. In Christianity alone is the idea of God freed from all the limitations of particularism and separate nationality. To it, God is a spirit, present in the least and the greatest, manifest in the fall of a sparrow and in the ordered harmony and law of the celestial bodies, revealing himself in the formative power of the plant and the instinctive tenderness of the animal for its young, and disclosing himself without reserve in the perfect self-sacrifice of the Son of Man. Thus in the religion of Jesus the central idea is that the informing principle of the whole universe is love, a love of which the intensest human affection is but an adumbration and a prophecy. A religion which starts from this idea of God must inspire men with a faith in the triumph of good over evil. But Christianity does not shut its eyes to the facts of life. It knows that in his first or natural state man is in alienation from God. "There is none righteous, no, not one." It is bound up with the finitude of man that he should assert his evil individual self and thus fight against the eternal

principle of love. Hence divisions, strifes, enmities ; hence the false judgments of ordinary life, which set a value, not upon the measure in which men have in them the active principle of love, but upon the accident of race or position or material splendour. By the divine touchstone of love, Christianity reveals the true worth of men. All external and superficial distinctions vanish away, and they stand forth without disguise as in the transparent ether of the eternal world. The prince may take a lower place than the meanest of his subjects ; the noble, divested of all outward pomp and circumstance, is revealed as he is, not as he appears ; the despised Samaritan is exalted above the unloving Jew ; the hard, unsympathetic elder brother gives place to the repentant prodigal ; the self-righteous, avaricious, unpatriotic Pharisee ranks far beneath the humble publican with his heart of gold ; and the poor erring woman is forgiven because she loved much. Thus Christianity produces a complete revolution in all the ordinary ideas of man. It humbles the exalted and uplifts the men of low degree. Its one unailing test is that of faith in the infinite love of God, a faith that is expressed in the God-like life of love. This is the open secret of Christianity ; marching under this banner it has achieved all its triumphs in the past, and marching under this banner it shall yet subdue the whole world to itself.

Now, if I am right in believing that Christianity fixes the spiritual rank of men by the measure of their genuine devotion to the race, it is evident that the mediæval conception of religion is only redeemed from other falsity by its apprehension of the truth that the unchastened desires of men are at war with the Christian principle of love. The mediæval saint, we may say, saw one aspect of Christianity, but failed to see the other and complementary aspect. He recognized that the natural man is enmity against God, but he did not recognize that the way to the blessed life is not by suppression, but by transformation, of the natural man. Mediævalism taught men to shun the temptations of wealth and refinement, not seeing that in fleeing from the world the saint was leaving its baser elements to reign unchecked ; it sought to raise men above the temptation to lose all wider interests in the absorbing interest of the family, by counselling a life of isolation, instead of helping them by influence and example to make the family an organ for the creation of wider interests ; it shrank from the jar and conflict of political life instead of allying itself with genuine patriotism ; it turned against the free spirit of scientific enquiry, unconsciously that every new insight into nature is a further revelation of the perfect mind of God. Against this false opposition of the secular and the religious life, the whole modern movement of humanity is certainly directed ; and if the mediæval were the true conception of Christianity, we must either be false to religion or return to the ideal of the ages called of faith. But it is not so : Christianity does not conceive of

the future world as different from this, but as the present world in its ideal aspect ; what a man is then he is now ; and what he is now is determined by the degree in which his life breathes of the spirit of love. Christianity is above all things a religion of this world. Whatever tends to break down the artificial barriers which prevent the unity of mankind from being realized, whatever tends to put every one in the position of a free man with all his capacities in full play, the spirit of Christianity imperatively demands. Its ideal is the perfect development of all, not of a few favored individuals. It is nothing, if not social. There is no department of human life or thought which lies beyond the sphere of its influence. The practical problem of our time is to make all sorts and conditions of men responsive to its touch. The busy life of industry and commerce must feel its inspiration, the economist and statesman must solve their problems under its guidance. Christianity requires us to surrender even our prejudices, and to come to the study of nature with no other desire than to know the truth. It counsels us to make ourselves at home as far as may be with the great products of literature and art, the most inestimable gifts of God to man. To be familiar with the creations of Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe, in which human life is presented as under the form of eternity and therefore detached from the complications which in actual life conceal its true nature, is the duty of every man who aspires to be a guide to others and to reach the full stature of the Christian. Nor can anyone who, from indolence or baser motives, remains indifferent to the struggle of his fellows for a higher social and national life be called a good Christian. The great poet of the middle ages reserves his supreme contempt for those who are too weak and indolent to merit either praise or blame. Untouched by the eternal conflict between light and darkness they never truly live. They turn as the wind blows, that their self-indulgent repose may not be disturbed. Having no convictions, they follow any standard. "Not a word of them," says Dante, "let us look and pass."

It cannot be hard to see the spirit which Christianity enjoins upon us in these days of progress towards higher forms of individual, social and political life. Whatever makes for the elevation of the race is sacred. There is a tendency in each of us to undervalue what is not obviously connected with his own vocation. The man of business is apt to imagine that the scholar is simply a drone in the busy hive of life ; to the politician the abstract thinker may seem at best a harmless visionary ; to the plain man the lover of art is apt to appear frivolous and unpractical ; the social reformer cannot understand how men can pass their lives in fruitless speculation with the agonized cry of the poor and the miserable going ever up to heaven ; the theologian has been known to look with suspicion at the "dangerous" tendency of science or philosophy. Thus is engendered a "spirit of watchful

jealousy," which forces each man back upon himself. All this is unchristian. We are all members of one body; none can afford to deapise the labours of others, because all agencies are needed to build up the one great edifice of society. From you who have an opportunity within these walls of gaining a wide and free prospect over human life we hope for better things. We expect you to cultivate the widest sympathy for all that makes for the improvement of man's estate, the growth of a rational patriotism, the spread of culture and refinement, the discovery and dissemination of truth in all its forms, scientific, historical and philosophical. And while you cultivate this Christian catholicity, we expect you to exhibit each in his special vocation the spirit of the true "religion of humanity." Material prosperity is all too dearly purchased at the cost of spiritual degradation. In the solemn drama of human life, it is not suffering and death, or even the dissolution of our air-drawn visions of success, that constitutes its true pathos, but ignoble ideals, the arrest of spiritual development, the pollution of those whose youth was full of promise. Our earnest desire and hope is that in this awful sense you will not fail, but will take your places in the chivalry of God,

"The soldier saints who row on row
Burn upward each to his point of bliss."

JOHN WATSON.

Too Late.

NO. 6.

He found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.—
HEBREWS xii, 16.

These are very sad words. They seem to cut off all hope. We seem to hear in their woeful syllables the harsh sound of the closing gate, which shuts out finally into everlasting gloom; the despairing cry of a shipwrecked soul. For if we do not repent we know that it is impossible for God to forgive us. It is self-evident that he who does not turn his back on evil can never attain to good. And certainly at first sight it does seem to be here implied that a man may seek most earnestly—with an agony of earnestness—to repent and yet seek to repent in vain. Is this possible? Can it be that such a depth of hopeless misery can be reached by any human soul, that although smitten to the heart and humbled into the dust by the sharp stings and intolerable overwhelming weight of conscious guilt, he may struggle in the evil net and yet find no deliverance for ever; in spite of all his frenzied efforts to climb up the steep sides of his pitfall he slips back every time with the loose and treacherous earth, and remains there fast imprisoned, an abject prey to the destroyer beyond all reach of hope?

We read the parable of the prodigal son—that gracious tale of love and forgiveness. Are we to think that according to this verse there might have been another version of that story which unlike the first should end unhappily, in which the prodigal, though yearning with all his heart to return to his father, should find himself unable to stir a foot on the homeward way? He is lying there in his rags hungry among the satisfied swine, who are well-content with the husks on which he finds that he cannot feed. Visions of his father's home, the plenty, the secure quietness, the sweet orderliness of it rise vividly before his blood-shot eyes. So the Scotch traveller in the African desert saw in his feverish dream the fresh green and the purple heather of his native glen, he heard the streams trickling down the hill-side, and the rush of the bold river chafing its brown to white as it tumbled over the rocks, and the ghost of a smile played about his baked lips. But he awoke to find that many a weary stretch of burning sand and many a restless league of rolling sea still lay between him and his native land. Thus it is with the poor prodigal. How desirable and dear his home now seems to him lying yonder behind the mountains that bound the horizon—so far—alas, so hopelessly far away. How beautiful the gentle and hallowed memories of that happy morning time when his mother heard him say his prayers

at her knee, and his father would reprove perhaps with the suspicion of a lurking smile the boyish sallies of his impetuous blood. Once in his foolish eagerness for a life of keener excitement he had despised it all as monotonous and slow. He had hated its wholesome restraints ; longed for liberty, which has proved bondage ; for untrammelled life in which he has found more than the bitterness of death. But now he comes to himself ; now he sees how fatal was his error. In a flash of thought beating through his fevered brain every step of the whole miserable steep descent by which he has come to this stands clearly revealed to him. A rushing tide of shame and regretful love stirs in him and drives his whole soul the entire energy of his will and thoughts and affections irresistibly homewards. That is the place he must reach, though it be to do the most menial offices and take the place of the lowest servant, when he was once a favoured son. Nay, though it were but to die, he must reach it ; though it were but to die and be buried in a dishonoured grave, where his father it may be or some kind soul that knew him in the promise of his youth may shed a tear of relenting pity over him ; where at least his native skies will not withhold their tearlike rain from the lowly sod that covers him, and the winds from his native hills will sigh a dirge to mourn him. Must we then understand it to be possible that all his desires are vain ; that though he gathers all his force into the effort and tries to spring up from the ground to arise and go to his father, his limbs are palsied and refuse their office ; a death-like frost has fallen on his powers of motion, like a limed bird whose wildly fluttering wings beat vainly to disengage the fetters from its feet ; his heart may flutter and beat its wings in passionate homeward aspirations, yet all the fire of wish and yearning that consumes him cannot move him forward one step on the way. He has taken root, it seems, in the tenacious mire of that far country. He has grown into his sins till they have become a vital part of him ; he can no more escape from them than from his own skin and bones. These sins were pleasant once ; such is the irony of time. He took their gilded chains upon him as lightly as though they had been threads of gossamer, from which he could break away at any moment. The gilding has gone long ago, and the remorseless grip of that heavy metal has rusted its way into his very flesh. But though he loathes them he cannot leave them. He has chosen his portion among the swine, and among them he must remain forever. Only in dreams can he revisit his happy home and be blessed by his father's welcoming smile. The brief brightness of the dream is followed always by the hopeless squalor of the waking reality. The golden past is gone, faded like the glory of morning from the mountains tops ; all that remains of it is but the haunting phantom of what was and what might have been to vex him with its torturing beauty. Miserable man—loving the good and yet

tied fast to the evil. Can it be that there is no deliverance for him and no forgiveness? That he can find no place of repentance, though he seek it carefully with tears? Is this the meaning of these terrible words that the poor prodigal may thus strive time after time with his whole soul to arise and go to his father, and yet fall back prostrate every time a hopeless outcast for ever from love and goodness, doomed to wail and gnash the teeth in outer darkness?

That is quite impossible, thank God. That cannot be the true interpretation of these words. It would be in flat contradiction to the whole substance of Christian Faith, which is a Faith of boundless hope. God is ever waiting to be gracious we are told. "Let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts and let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him and to our God for he will abundantly pardon." "Come now and let us reason together, though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool." To see Him is to find Him; the will to return is already a returning. The prodigal may have gone very far from home; the backward way may be long and rough and thorny; to be retraced only with bleeding footprints; but if the heart be truly set homewards, the feet can follow. The help of strong invisible arms will bear up the tired wayfarer; healing waters will spring up in the desert to refresh him; and heavenly voices will sing songs of comfort in his ear. Jesus Christ came to seek that which was lost. He despaired in no man or woman. Sinners, whom all the world had given up as irreclaimable, were drawn to Him to find the rest which he offered to the weary and heavy laden. He did not turn away even those who came to Him at the eleventh hour, but gave them work to do and full wages. His wonderful love, His divine audacity of faith, did not disdain even the poor remnants of a life whose best and most vigorous hours had been devoted to the cause of the enemy. He accepted the last moments of the dying thief; that belated service—so paltry as it seemed; a single golden grain among the dust and ashes of a life-time spent in wickedness. But yet he accepted it; the ignorant and imperfect praise; the dim broken words of vague and unintelligent prayer. And so the malefactor's cross was lit up by a ray from the setting sun of our Lord's earthly life, which has made it glow to the eyes of all the many generations since that time like a beacon of immortal hope. It is never too late then to seek the mercy of God revealed to us in Jesus Christ. Whosoever diligently seeks a place of repentance in this sense shall find it; his tears shall assuredly be wiped away from his eyes and God will give him laughter for tears and the oil of joy for mourning.

What then is the meaning of our text. It does not pronounce on any living soul the doom of irretrievable despair; but yet it bears a pregnant and a stern message to each of us. It

does not assert that a man may find it impossible, though he earnestly will, to repent. It does say that his repentance by no means puts him into the same position as though he had not sinned. We have here not a sentence of doom, but a weighty warning. We are warned of the limits of repentance, lest trusting too much to its virtues we should delay it one instant. We are told there are somethings that even repentance cannot do for us, in order that there may be the more in our lives that needeth not to be repented of. Repentance is indeed the key that opens to us the future, but it has no magic to change the past ; or to turn aside all its consequences. Esau was truly grieved for his folly in having yielded so far to the appetite of the moment as to sell his birthright ; but all his grief could not bring the birthright back. He found, to use a homely phrase, that he could not eat his cake and have it. That which is once done cannot be undone. The most heartfelt contrition of to-morrow can never recall for us the chances of to-day. God will forgive us even at the eleventh hour if we turn to him sincerely ; but he will not give us our life to live over again, and he will not spare us from reaping a heavy harvest from the seeds we have sown to the flesh so plentifully and gaily it may have been, in many a sorrow, many a dark despairing hour which might have been avoided, and many a sharp struggle with temptation which our own evil habits have made all but overmasteringly strong. It is good to repent, but how much better, how incomparably easier not to have formed the habit of sinning. Late is certainly better than never ; it remains nevertheless a shrivelled, halting second best compared with the fulness of blessing once within our reach. For we must not forget this—that although repentance makes us better than we were, it can never make us all we might have been. If the man who received five talents had squandered three on riotous living before he began to trade in his Master's service, do you think when the day of reckoning came he could have had ten talents to show ? Again, everyone will acknowledge how difficult it is to learn any art or dexterity after a certain time of life. Few persons would be bold or foolish enough to determine that they should wait till they had passed their fortieth year and then begin to learn to paint or to play some difficult instrument. Apart from the obvious fact that no one can tell what space of time is still remaining for him, we all know that the eye or hand or ear must be moulded while still plastic and unspoilt by perverse bias—while still there is little to unlearn—if they are ever to attain the exquisite delicacy and sureness needed for any considerable attainment in those difficult arts, and that an elderly person cannot hope to become at best more than a very indifferent performer. Now the art of living to God, that is, of making the most of ourselves, as it is the noblest, so it is also the most difficult of all the arts. As much as any

other it needs to be learnt; to be learnt well it requires of those who aspire to be great in it that they submit to training at the earliest possible age. It is hard to enter in at the straight gate; the older one grows the harder it becomes. It is no easy walking along the narrow way; and young feet take to it much the most naturally. Our life here is a school; the various ages of it are classes in ascending grades. Failure to profit at any one stage is doubly disastrous; the unlearnt lessons are not likely to be taken up after the proper time for them is past; and since the later stages presuppose the training of the earlier, neglect at one point means incalculable loss all along the line. If as boys we do not learn reverence and truth telling; we are not likely ever fully to learn those lessons—indispensable as they are, not only in themselves but as the only basis for so much else. Our days are linked together in an indissoluble chain. What we can be now and hereafter is limited by what we have been and done, even now. The heaviest burden of our present is always the superincumbent pressure of our past.

And yet, however obvious all this is, it is in practice like many other obvious truths, more commonly forgotten than remembered. Men talk of sowing wild oats in one's youth, as if that were almost a laudable, certainly a very venial kind of husbandry; as if it were not as certain as that two and two make four, that what a man soweth that shall he reap; and the crop that springs from a wasted youth is a useless maturity, at least comparatively useless. Almost everybody intends in a vague way at some indefinite time to mend his ways, as though it did not matter much when. They will turn over a new leaf when nearly all the book has been blotted; it all comes to the same thing if as of course they mean to, they do reform some day or other. All this is one of the many legitimate consequences of that abject superstition which was clearly exposed for you last Sunday—that religion is in the main an ingenious device by slight-of-hand substitutions, and so forth, for cheating the gallows at the last and securing a preposterously comfortable position in the next world. If it were so, then Mrs. Quickly's view of the matter would admit of defence, when she advised the reprobate knight to patch up his old body for heaven. Be not deceived; God is not mocked. What a man soweth he shall also reap. It does matter when. It is very far from coming to the same thing. There is the greatest, nay, there is all the difference. It is the most infatuate folly to delay if ever we mean to enter on the Christian life, that is on the truly human life at all. 1st, each day's postponement makes it by so much the more unlikely that we ever shall begin; 2nd, the more difficult for us if and when we do. Think of the labor and regret we are so laying up for ourselves, the dreary tracts of waste and desert past we shall have to look back upon, the

miserably shrunken present and future we shall then have to hear and fear. To put off is to tie weights to our limbs before entering on an arduous race; wherein only they who so run that they may obtain, can hope to obtain; it is to doom ourselves to an impoverished christianity, to a dwarfed and stunted manhood. Those who begin thus late are little likely to attain to great things; they cannot hope to be otherwise than poor scholars in the great school of God; indifferent artists in the greatest and noblest of all the arts.

The great danger for us is that we think too meanly of our own life. The significant ephemeral noises that are perpetually dinning into our ears distract us from the grandeur and awfulness of our eternal destiny. We dwell in corners, and do not lift our eyes to the everlasting hills. We do not withdraw ourselves that we may know how the silent stars are over us and silent graves under; how it behoves us to make well that choice which though brief is endless. Like Esau, we despise our birthright. He came home hungry from his hunting, and in the rage of his appetite it seemed to him—great child—that he could not live without the smoking mess of pottage which he saw in his wily brother's hands. At that moment, what was to him the value of his birthright? It seemed so visionary, so unreal a thing beside the unmistakeable reality of his hunger. And so for the momentary gratification he bartered it away, and only when it was too late he awoke to the bitter sense that he had been fooled; that he had exchanged substance for shadow; what had seemed unreal was the enduring and true, and what had seemed near and sure was mere semblance and vain show, a passing vapour, the shadow of a smoke. That is what happens to all of us. We are in bondage to the things that are seen and temporal; the blinking dupes of the deceptive shows which seem to our weak eyes the only real things; our shining birthright—our inheritance in God—our portion in that which endureth for ever, is as nothing beside the clamorous hunger or thirst of the passing hour. How noble a thing, how happy our life might be if we could only live a little in earnest, and with wider views, realizing our true gains, appropriating ever more and more our true inheritance—all that we can make our own by the strength and clearness of the heart's hand and eye, by knowledge, sympathy and love; learning the lessons of each day and doing its work; growing always in power of will; in relish and capacity for pure enjoyment; in manliness, in charity. But alas! the pitiable thing, the wretched squalid tragedy of human life is that so few men do make any approach to attaining their birthright. So few arrive at the full stature of their manhood; so many, instead of realizing their possibilities, remain dwarfs and slaves, when they might have been kings and giants. Their hearts are darkened that they believe a lie. They go after vain things and spend their money on that which is not bread,

their labour on that which profiteth not. They pass their time in frivolous and selfish ways ; and fritter away their stock of thought and feeling on shallow pleasures and insignificant pursuit and ephemeral excitements. So when the parting of the ways come, and the crisis that decides the quality of the life, there is no accumulated reserve of resisting power to meet the onset of strong temptation ; the wrong turning is taken and the descent begins henceforth to be definite and unmistakable down that steep slope which it is so terribly hard for those who would retrace their steps to ascend again. The ascent is hard, but it is not impossible. God forbid. It is hard to unwind the coils of evil habit, to tear out an evil that has become incorporate in our flesh. Yet it can be done and has been done. Even at the eleventh hour the love and mercy of God may reach and lighten the self-darkened soul. But the anguish of regret that sighs over the ruins of a wasted life shall not be opened to such an one ; the blessing he might have had shall never more be his ; he shall find no place of repentance though he seek it carefully with tears.

Let us carry this text away with us and its warnings deeply graven on our minds. The past may be forgiven ; it cannot be undone ; the iron doors are shut upon it ; it is irreparable, irrevocable. God Himself cannot change it now. We may regret it bitterly ; we may look back wistfully on many doom-fraught hours, which we recklessly squandered, hours pregnant, had we but known it, with the seeds of future weal or woe ; on many golden opportunities offered once, but not once more, which we lightly wasted. We may drop salt tears for all that might have been ; the love which our own fault lost for ever ; the friends our hasty spleen drove from us ; the knowledge that we might have gained ; the health and vigor burnt out in riot and excess ; the steady will become irresolute and flaccid ; hard and callous from the induration of selfishness and evil passions, the heart that was once so soft ; the keen edge of our delight in all that is good and fair, blunted by low indulgences ; dulled and coarsened that sensitiveness of the pure heart which thrills in musical response to the lightest breathing of God's spirit, in the sweetness and beauty of the lowliest and commonest things—a wayside flower, the light of a child's eye, a bird's song, the kindly greeting of a passing voice along the hawthorn-scented country roads in spring. When once the ravage of the sins that war against the life has robbed a human soul of these things, the jewels of its crown, its royal birth-right, tears are of no avail. They are gone ; no repentance, though we bathe in floods of it, can ever bring them back. Well for many of us here that we can still cleave to the hope of life and immortality, brought to light by Jesus Christ, and look towards that land beyond, where under more genial suns and in a larger air the soul so dwarfed and stunted and deformed by the waste of sin and time, may grow at

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last to the fair proportions of God's plan, and flower into the bloom which has been nipped and mildewed here. The past is gone for ever, but the future is our own. Never perhaps in this world can some of us attain our full birthright, never become what we might have been, what God meant us to be. The spring time of our mortal life may be past and many powers of heart and will that once might have been ours will quicken no more on earth. But we are encouraged to believe that there is still time for us, if we seize upon it, to lay hold of the inexhaustible possibilities of growth that lie for us in the boundless seed field of eternity. If we seek to God, as the repentant Esau sought his earthly father, with the exceeding bitter cry: "Bless me, even me also, O my father," we shall find that our Heavenly Father is rich in reserves of blessing, and that he still has one to bestow even on the most unworthy.

But you who are young, whose spring time is now, pitch your aspirations high, be content with no second best. Enter into your full birthright, your full freedom as sons of God. See that ye quit you as men and gain the full stature of your manhood in Jesus Christ. Many unblotted leaves of the book of life seem still to be before you. Keep them unstained by sordid blots, write pure records there; of high aims and earnest striving and fair achievement. So, and only so, will you prepare for yourself a bright future, secure at least from the sharpest sorrows, that bitter sorrow that bows the head in shame and self-disgust. So you will enter on the path of the just which shineth even more and more unto the perfect day. "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth; while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."

JOHN MACNAUGHTON.

The Evangelization of the Earth the Supreme Duty of the Church.

NO. 7.

If I were to chose a text to-day it would probably be, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth, go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations," illustrated by such other passages as, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you," and "Blessed be Jehovah God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things." The topic which naturally rises out of this is, that the evangelization of the whole world is the supreme duty of the church as an organized body, and of the individual christian at the present hour and ever has been. I do not say that the conversion or regeneration of the earth is our duty. That is retained in the hands of Omnipotence. But evangelization, that is, telling the story of redeeming love in the ears of every human being, is clearly within the resources of the church to-day, and for this the Giver of all our gifts may well hold us responsible. It is always well to use such language as shall keep clearly before us that the Divine Being is asking no more from us in the region of Christian activity than our own consciences witness that we are well able to perform. To believe that God is requiring impossibilities from us is a sure way to lull our sense of duty to sleep. To recognize that our powers are thoroughly adequate to the task imposed, and that the performance of it will be a blessing is to possess ourselves of strong motives towards undertaking the duty.

If we keep before us the broad import of the Master's commission to gospelize the world, we will not draw any hard and fast lines between the various departments of missionary activity, into which for convenience sake the church has divided her work. The work is one, and we need to emphasize this trite observation because the temptation to forget it is often very strong. Our Divine Master has laid upon us the responsibility for all sorts and conditions of men; for the savages and the barbarians who have only a rudimentary civilization or none at all; and for the polished member of modern society whose veneer of culture often steels his heart against God.

The importance of maintaining our Home Mission work in the utmost possible degree of efficiency cannot be overestimated, in this land at the present time. The old lands are making this continent a dumping ground for a good deal of their rubbish, and the question is, can we assimilate the heterogeneous material into good healthy soil for the growth of the bread of life for the nations. I must not be mis-

understood here. A most important element of our country's growth and prosperity in the past has been the stream of sturdy and industrious emigrants from European shores. When we compare the general character of our emigrants with the general type of those who pass through "Castle Garden," we have reason to be profoundly thankful. But in the formation of a new country, with the conditions under which we live now, there must be elements of peril, and to grapple successfully with these the gospel alone has power. But Jerusalem and Judea must not exhaust all our efforts. We must preach the gospel in the regions beyond; yea, in the very uttermost parts of the earth. We need the peculiar inspiration of foreign mission work, of establishing new centres of activity, of breaking virgin soil. I also wish to make it clear that responsibility for publishing redemption to the earth does not rest exclusively upon any class of men. In speaking of the church we must not understand that it means the CLERGY. No, it means every man, woman and child whose heart has been touched with Divine love, and who has found strength to venture upon the foundation which cannot be moved. I am not speaking therefore to-day, merely to those who have felt themselves called to the Christian ministry, and who are holding themselves in readiness for any sphere of labor to which the Divine Being in his Providence may direct them. They do not need the exhortation, except that they may be advised that some humble and contracted field of work at home may afford as grand scope for heroism and labour as the most attractive congregation, and might be a choice as pleasing to Jesus as China, India, or the islands of the sea.

I am speaking to-day to the students in training for so-called secular positions and to the Christian men and women, our neighbours, assembled with us here. To all who bow at the name of Jesus comes the command, "Go Ye." The Rev. J. Fraser Campbell, one of our missionaries in India, spoke like a true minister of the New Testament when he said to the Rajah of Indore, "The Founder of Christianity made it a part of our religion to tell others about it and we feel that we have not liberty to exercise our religion, unless we have freedom to explain to others its plan of Salvation." But how many Christians have this freedom in the highest degree and do not care to use it! How ready we are to forget that the burden of souls ought to press upon our hearts as much as it does on the Salvationists who kneel in the street. You do not believe in their methods! Well, adopt wiser ones, but the END which they are seeking to reach should be striven after with ardent zeal by every soul which has the breath of life. It disgusts one to hear people, declaiming against the sensational methods of the Salvation Army, who never moved a finger nor opened a mouth to commend Jesus Christ to men.

What mighty resources for the evangelization of the earth are

lying undeveloped among us! I am not thinking now of money, although it is important. I am thinking of the talents for dealing with men, the culture, the knowledge of human nature, the leisure time, and the social influence which might be consecrated to God, but which has not yet been laid on his altar in the highest service of man. We have heard that it is more blessed to give than to receive. We have perhaps heard it illustrated by the running stream and the stagnant pool. The clear limpid rivulet gives ungrudgingly, it gives its all, a blessed boon to man and beast, as it flows free and open by the highway. With beauty on its banks, health on its bosom and glad some music in its rippling sound it flows on to bless many homes, and at last to pour its tiny volume into the sea, whose fulness it cannot swell and from whose cavernous depths it hears no murmur of applause. Contrast with this record the stagnant pool, type of the niggard selfish soul wherever found, which keeps all its blessings within its own breast and has no outlet for the spontaneous overflow of spiritual life. The pool no more than the soul can reverse nature's unchangeable laws, and as the light and life-giver rises higher and higher in the summer sky, clothing all the earth in radiant beauty, he brings to the pool a life which is only death. It shrinks green and loathsome from its deserted shores, to breed pestilence and sorrow in the whole neighbourhood.

But I desire to speak of SOME OF THE ENCOURAGEMENTS WHICH WE HAVE, TO PROSECUTE THE PUBLICATION OF REDEMPTION; for I am an optimist and not a pessimist.

1. CONSIDER THE FACILITIES OF THE AGE IN WHICH WE LIVE, FOR GOSPELIZING THE WORLD. Let me ask you a question: What age of the world would you have liked best to live in, if you had had your choice? Would you have chosen the long centuries of the antediluvians, in days when earth was young and knowledge small, in days when individual might was right, and the fierce hunter, he of the strong arm and the swift step, ruled over men? Would you rather have lived on some grassy hillside of Judea in the palmy days of her Kings, passing the narrow circle of your life in the hope of a deliverer who was yet to appear, visiting the Holy City three times a year at the set feasts and then passing into darkness you scarcely knew where? Or, would you rather have lived in the golden age of Classic Greece when her wonderful literature was forming, when the constitutions of her states were growing amid the clamour of the agora and the clash of arms, and when her appreciation of the majestic beauty of nature and the nobility of duty were poured forth in such inimitable strains by the singers on the blue Ægean? If you had lived there, you would have found her civilization barbarous and the comforts of life few. Would you have chosen to appear amid the military and legal triumphs of Rome, that you might have imbibed her insane desire for conquest,

that you might have buckled on armour to pass life in the turmoil of camps and amid the shock of battle, having no will and knowing no law but the caprice of the rude savage above you, commissioned to treat you worse than the brutes that perish? Surely no one would have voluntarily chosen the dull sleep of the Middle Ages, when all enterprise except art vanished from the earth, when superstition enthroned on ignorance took the place of religion and the growth of the human mind stood still. Some, perhaps, would have chosen the era of the Reformation with its fresh spiritual life, its stirring conflicts, its heroic triumphs. But surely it is better to enjoy peacefully a boon like religious liberty than to have our whole life consumed plucking it out of the lion's jaws. There are some in every Protestant congregation who look upon the Puritan period as the golden age of religious life and thought. But if these could turn back the hands of time and take their seats to-day in the congregations of Baxter, Howe or Jonathan Edwards they would be deeply disappointed. They would find that in the apprehension and enjoyment of divine truth the saints of the Most High have been ever marching on.

Mr. Gladstone, who is no mean student of history, declares that in no half century of the world's life would he rather have chosen a career than in that in which he has been a prominent figure. Whether we judge of an age on the low plane of material comforts or on the higher one of individual happiness, or on the highest of all, the triumphs of spiritual truth, there has never been an age like the present. Especially in heathen hands has the glory of the redeeming Christ been seen. Doors that were fast barred a generation ago have been opened as if by magic in most wonderful ways. The fiercest warriors, the wildest tribes, the lowest races have been brought to the confession of the dying Julian. After striving for years with no common ability to revivify expiring Paganism he fell, mortally wounded, on the Phrygian plain. Taking a handful of his clotted blood, he flung it towards the skies exclaiming, Theodoret tells us, "Thou hast conquered, O Galilean!"

But what do such unique opportunities demand of us? With India and China at our doors, with almost every land open to the gospel, with appliances for spreading intelligence and ministering comfort such as put the fairy tales of our fathers to shame, with old prejudices broken down, a friendly brotherly feeling prevailing among nations, what may the Divine King of Sion reasonably expect of his pledged servants?

2. CONSIDER THE IMPULSE GIVEN TO OUR OWN SPIRITUAL LIFE BY ENDEAVOURING TO LEAD MEN TO CHRIST. To be moving in harmony with Christ's will must be a blessed thing to any soul. What a privilege to be able to join in Paul's prayer and to labour along its lines — "That I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the

fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." But not to be too general, I may mention a specific benefit to those who are investigating the problems of life and the foundations of truth. Such are liable to be disturbed. Some of the old forms under which we have been accustomed to apprehend truth will be swept away. This applies particularly to the present time, when we find ourselves face to face with an entirely new conception of the physical universe, and to a large extent with new methods of thought, trained by the investigation of this fresh scientific knowledge. Theology and even divine philosophy seem to be carefully feeling their way in trying to adjust themselves to a new condition of things. In such a period, similar in some respects to the Reformation, some traditional beliefs will "get a shog that'll maist ruin them a'." It would be easy to publish an *Index Expurgatorius*, to fix upon Thomas Aquinas as the *ne plus ultra* of speculative thought and settled belief, and curse all further investigation, but this would soon be most disastrous to the true spiritual life of the soul. Its health, to be vigorous, must be nourished in the fresh free air, and in the full light of the noon day sun shining upon every certain conclusion of criticism and every department of thought. But it is very important that we maintain a strong full current of spiritual life, while the intellect is feeling its final position. How is it to be accomplished? By keeping ourselves in living contact with the personal Christ in leading seeking souls to Him. By plunging amid the sins and sorrows of the world, filled with the assurance of the love and compassion of that great heart upon whose loving-kindness our spirits repose, and laying the very best that is in us on this altar of God and humanity, that the Crucified may see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied.

3. CONSIDER THE GLORIOUS PROOFS, FURNISHED IN THE HISTORY OF MISSIONS DURING THIS CENTURY, THAT THE GOSPEL IS THE POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION. Men seek to-day the verification of doctrine in the region of experience, but the Gospel has no rival in its readiness to submit to the ordeal. Just as the Peruvian bark tree grows amidst the malarial exhalations whose baleful influences it is intended to cure, so, side by side with the determined attacks of the most radical unbelief of to-day, we have the most wonderful conquests of the cross among the heathen. I can remember the time when a Fiji Islander was the synonym for the lowest and cruelest type of savage. But, within fifty years from the landing of the first Missionaries among them, there was not an open and avowed heathen on any island of the group. A much larger proportion of them attended worship every Sabbath than of the citizens of Kingston; one-fourth of the entire population are in full communion, and they are voluntarily carrying the gospel to their neighbours of New Guinea at the risk of their lives.

What an illustration of the power of Divine truth we have in the history of Madagascar. The Missionaries, after establishing a Christian nucleus and translating the Bible, were forced to leave the islanders to face more than twenty years cruel persecution alone. Yet they were not alone. God was with them. Although a very large number suffered death, and the survivors endured every enormity that the might of the strong and cruel could inflict, the Missionaries after an absence of twenty-one years found more Christians on the Island than when they had left. I saw Bibles in London whose corners were all mouldered away by having been long buried in the ground from the persecutor's rage, and others with many of their leaves glued together by the blood of their former owners, on whose persons they were concealed when they were speared for the faith.

Our eyes have lately been much turned to Uganda. Since Hannington fell and MacKay died, it has been much in the world's thought. And there, illustrations of the gospel's transforming power have not been wanting. Among a race so low that ethnologists have doubted if they would ever be susceptible of civilization, even children have furnished martyrs. Some of the pages of the royal household, with their arms cut off, were bound over a slow fire and mockingly told to sing of Jesus now. They took up the challenge in a hymn they had learned:

"Daily, daily sing to Jesus,
Sing my soul his praises due,
All he does deserves our praises,
And our deep devotion too."

And so they continued, until their lips, cracked and shrivelled by the flames, refused to utter a sound. Are not these dusky children of Africa worthy to be set side by side with the ancient Christian martyrs, who poured forth their blood on the sand of the Roman arena for Christ's Crown and Covenant? Ought we not to turn from the contemplation of such scenes with new courage and new faith in the gospel of the grace of God?

4. CONSIDER THE DISTINGUISHED EXAMPLES OF CHRISTIAN HEROISM AND ZEAL WHICH THE FIELD OF THE WORLD'S EVANGELIZATION HAS PRODUCED. The Church needs examples—not only the Great Exemplar whose life was lived long ago under conditions somewhat different from ours, but living epistles known and read of all men, produced amidst the temptations of to-day. No doubt there are multitudes of humble Christians whose lives would be very inspiring were they known. But they live and labour and suffer and are faithful, where no eye sees them except the eye of Him who apportions their heavenly reward. The worker in the foreign field stands forth before the eyes of all the Christian host like Aaron, Hur and Moses on the mountain

top. They are placed in positions of peculiar difficulty, and these often by the blessing of God make them great. When I ascend my pulpit stairs on Sabbath morning, sometimes with an ill prepared message and a cold heart, I catch sight of a householder here and there who has borne me and my work on his supplications at the family altar before the throne of grace. I know that many a heart is winging its way to the ear that is so ready to hear, for a blessing on the word. That strengthens me. But the foreign missionary stands up to preach the cross before a crowd, some of whom are thirsting for his blood, while others are ready with hostile arguments. The folds of their robes are filled with weapons and their hearts with hate. No other Christian is near him. Dependent solely on God, the sense of need drives him closer, than we are driven, to the source of power. The blacksmith's arm is developed by the daily exercise of hard blows on the anvil and the missionary's soul is developed by the hard blows of his environment and his deep draughts at the fountain of grace. It does us much good to read the lives of such heroes. They supplement the book of the Acts, and the Eleventh Chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Charles Simeon of Cambridge kept the portrait of Henry Martyn hanging before him in his study and he used to look up and fancy it was saying to him, "Be in earnest, don't trifle, don't trifle." And he often replied, "Yes, Henry, I will be in earnest, I will not trifle, for souls are perishing and Jesus is to be glorified." Such an inspiration, the lives of the heroes of the world's evangelization are to the church of to-day:

"The tidal wave of human souls
Into our inmost being rolls,
And lifts us unawares
Above all meaner cares."

Surely we ought not to allow the difficulties in our way, be they large or small, to daunt us from the performance of our duty, when we see that they have been so overruled and blessed in the history of the past to those who faced them and to all beholders.

5. CONSIDER HOW ATTEMPTING THE EVANGELIZATION OF THE WORLD HAS BROADENED AND DEEPENED THE CHURCH'S CONCEPTION OF TRUTH. In the foreign field the Church is learning the true doctrinal perspective, or the relative importance of the various truths of the gospel. The first missionaries carried all the controversies of the Fatherland among the heathen. Even a man like Narayan Sheshadrai could not at first believe it possible that there could be sincere Christian men in the Church of Scotland, because he had been trained by an ardent Free Churchman, who, as he communicated to his convert a Scottish accent, also insensibly communicated to him an animus against the Establishment. But a more excellent way has been dis-

covered. I daresay you have heard the story of that shipwreck on the English Coast on a stormy Sabbath afternoon. The villagers gathered to see a vessel which had been flung by the storm upon the reef and was fast breaking up. The stump of the mast stood above the waves and to it several sailors were clinging with rapidly decreasing strength. The violence of the storm precluded any measure of help, but an old sea captain pushed his speaking trumpet into the village minister's hand, that he might give a word of comfort to the souls that were passing away. The minister paused an instant—what should he say? Not the principal points of the morning sermon! No, he shouted, "Are you looking to Jesus?" and back with the wind came the ready answer, "Aye, aye, Sir!" And immediately there followed the well-known strains of

"Jesus, lover of my Soul."

The Missionary among the heathen is like a minister in the presence of death. He must send home, if possible, vital saving truth. And the truth which has proved its power in the huts of savages will be powerful in the palaces of Kings. The first missionaries who went to Greenland began to teach the natives, as they themselves had been taught in the Seminary, the truths of Natural Theology, the proofs of the being of a God, and other truths; but they made no impression. One of their number undertook one day to tell a chief named Kajarnak the story of the incarnation and crucifixion. The savage was moved, he sprang to his feet, and striking his spear deep into the earthen floor of the hut, exclaimed, "Tell me all this again!" The missionary repeated the narrative. "Did he die for Kajarnak's sins?" said the melted savage! It was the beginning of a brighter day in Greenland. And when the story was told from the pulpits of the 18th century it came like the breath of a new spring to the dull formal life of the day. It seemed like a fresh revelation of the power of Divine love.

Are any of us looking for a niche in which to set up an image of ourselves before which future generations as well as the present may fall down and worship. Are we seeking great things for ourselves? Let us not seek them! The desire of glory is laudable, but what is glory? What is the glory of a King? Is it his crown, his robes, the gilded carving of his throne or the incense of adulation in which he moves? Does it spring from the number of his armies, the wisdom of his councillors or the splendour of his court? Does it not rather consist in turning a deaf ear to the solicitations of pleasure and selfish ambition, and consecrating time and mental power to the amelioration of the woes of the meanest subjects in the realm? What is the glory of a scholar? Is it the lustre of his gown or the hood of his degree or the thunder of applause which greets him as he goes forward to take some new honour from the Chancellor's hand? Is it not his power of interpreting nature and mind? His devotion

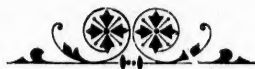
in scorning delights and living laborious days that humanity may be blessed and the poorest in future years may have that which the wealthiest cannot now obtain ? What is the glory of God ? Not his mechanical skill, or physical strength, or the splendour of the place where his throne stands, or the hosannas of the beings who minister around Him there. The glory of the Divine love is that he stooped down to lift sinners from the mire to a place near his heart. This is what the angels desire to look into. This forms an unfolding of Jehovah's soul such as the principalities and the powers in heavenly places have not elsewhere seen. To enter fully into this desire of the divine heart, to allow it to possess us wholly and to give it effect in such forms of self-denying labour as may come within our reach will be our highest glory and our deepest peace.

JAMES ROSS.



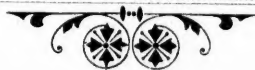
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